

A black and white photograph of three women laughing and holding glasses, overlaid with a grid pattern and large blue text. The text reads "THE ARCHIVE" in a bold, sans-serif font, arranged in four rows: "THE" (top row), "ARCH" (second row), "IVE" (third row), and "E" (bottom row). The grid lines are thin and light-colored, creating a subtle background pattern.

THE  
ARCH  
IVE  
E

Edited by Charles Merewether

Documents of Contemporary Art

Co-published by Whitechapel and The MIT Press

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## Documents of Contemporary Art

In recent decades artists have progressively expanded the boundaries of art as they have sought to engage with an increasingly pluralistic environment. Teaching, curating and understanding of art and visual culture are likewise no longer grounded in traditional aesthetics but centred on significant ideas, topics and themes ranging from the everyday to the uncanny, the psychoanalytical to the political.

The Documents of Contemporary Art series emerges from this context. Each volume focuses on a specific subject or body of writing that has been of key influence in contemporary art internationally. Edited and introduced by a scholar, artist, critic or curator, each of these source books provides access to a plurality of voices and perspectives defining a significant theme or tendency.

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Whitechapel 

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**Then I went  
around shopping  
for something  
better and now  
I just drop  
everything into  
the same-size  
cardboard boxes  
that have a colour  
patch on the side  
for the month of  
the year. I really  
hate nostalgia,  
though, so deep  
down I hope they**

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One of the defining characteristics of the modern era has been the increasing significance given to the archive as the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored and recovered. Created as much by state organizations and institutions as by individuals and groups, the archive, as distinct from a collection or library, constitutes a repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history is written. This volume provides a contextual introduction to the ways in which concepts of the archive have been defined, examined, contested and reinvented by artists and cultural observers from the early twentieth century to the present. For it is in the spheres of art and cultural production that some of the most searching questions have been asked concerning what constitutes an archive and what authority it holds in relation to its subject.

The first section, *Traces*, gathers together texts which consider the relation between art and the archive in terms of the perceptions and understandings that events and experiences always leave behind them by means of the index, or residual mark, of their occurrence. The archive is not one and the same as forms of remembrance, or as history. Manifesting itself in the form of traces, it contains the potential to fragment and destabilize either remembrance as recorded, or history as written, as sufficient means of providing the last word in the account of what has come to pass.

In 'A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad' (1925) Sigmund Freud speculated that the operation of memory itself can be understood as a process of inscription. He compared the functions of psychic recording and memory to a child's erasable writing tablet. Both form a collection of inscribed traces that is at once the mark of writing and an archival practice, and both also stave off forgetfulness and the passage of time, temporality itself. Writings by Christian Boltanski, Susan Hiller and Ilya Kabakov each reflect on relationships to objects in ways that resonate with Freud. Recognizing the affinity of their practice with that of the collector, they explore ways in which objects act as mnemonic devices which, gathered together, constitute a personal archive. Discussing her 1994 installation in the Freud Museum, London, Susan Hiller describes her practice of 'working through objects' to locate their cultural meanings, recalling Freud's comparison of his method of 'working through' the concealed layers of the unconscious mind with the task of the archaeologist. Boltanski's text was

written as the prelude to a photographic sequence in his first artist's book, *Research and Presentation of All that Remains of My Childhood 1944-1950* (1969). The announcement of his endeavour to collect all the traces of his own and other people's lives suggests a symbolic gesture that, without a direct invocation of the Holocaust, stands against its catastrophic destruction and erasure as much as it attempts to resist the inevitability of death. The text is suffused with pathos: the archival impulse to preserve the remains of life beyond death exposes its own vulnerability and futility.

Ilya Kabakov's first installations in a Moscow apartment at the start of the *perestroika* period, reconstructing imaginary vestiges of communal apartment life, arose from his view of the almost existential pathos that garbage symbolized. The story of 'The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away' (c. 1977) reminds us of the impoverished environment of the Soviet Union in which even the lowliest thing could be precious, and therefore the consequent logic of madness in which nothing was thrown away. Accumulations of the discarded and useless can undermine the valorization of remembrance, as opposed to forgetting, as much as they render absurd the process of making meaningful. From this perspective, Andy Warhol's rare mention of his 'time capsules' in his 1975 text gains greater significance. Warhol decided to be an indiscriminate collector of everything connected with his life and work. Filling boxes on an almost daily basis with whatever came his way, he ironically named them after the caskets of carefully chosen objects ceremoniously buried for future generations to discover. In contrast to the economy of scarcity in which Kabakov's work was situated, Warhol's boxes of personal ephemera become the relics of a commodity-based culture.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), the study of the archive was compared by Michel Foucault to the practice of learning about the past through its material remains. The 'archaeologist of knowledge' aims to recover and reconstruct the archive, to reveal how it shapes our relation to the past and the construction of historical meaning. For Foucault the archive governs what is said or unsaid, recorded or unrecorded. His analogy with archaeology is more expansive than Freud's, discerning an underlying structure governing the thought systems and values of any given society, in relation to its own people and others. Thus who determines, and what conditions enable, a history to be written depend upon the definition of the archive.

In response to Foucault, Giorgio Agamben argues that in light of the phenomenon of the testimonial which has borne witness to catastrophic events such as those of the Nazi era, there are conditions in which the relation between the sayable and the unsayable becomes a relation 'between a possibility and an impossibility of speech' (*Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*,

1989). This recasting of the terms towards the speaking subject places greater emphasis on the conditions which allow or disallow for speech and therefore, in the context of the archive, makes more evident the fragility of its authority. This precariousness is further explored in Renée Green's text, which is based on a dialogue between Agamben's text and her own practice. She writes of idiosyncrasies of ordering, unpredictability and chance operations, or in-between spaces and remnants that become part of a living process in her work. These disturb the traditional structuring and ordering of the archive. From this perspective, Green discusses the significance for her own practice of the North American artist Robert Smithson's notions of entropy and 'non-site'. If the archive can serve as no more than a tomb of remnants and traces, where is the place for that which does not survive or which, by virtue of the archive, is forgotten? Green explores a point of intersection between the biographical and autobiographical which, as with Boltanski and Kabakov, becomes a recurring source of meditation on that which makes her practice possible.

These writings provoke us to ask: In what way is the document sufficient in representing those histories where there is no evidence remaining – no longer a thread of continuity, a plenum of meaning or monumental history – but rather a fracture, a discontinuity, the mark of which is obliteration, erasure and amnesia? Furthermore, we may ask: What temporal zone does the document occupy, what is its relation to the past, to the present and even to the future? Is what is materially present, visible or legible adequate to an event that has passed out of present time?

The second section, *Inscriptions*, examines ways in which the law of the archive has been inscribed in definitions of the document and the body. For Paul Ricoeur ('Archives, Documents, Traces', 1978), the concept of the archive is synonymous with the trace and the document: in each we are able to measure not only a relation between the past and present, but between the event and evidence of its occurrence, and between the fabric of everyday life and its representation.

While Ricoeur focuses on the writing of history, Allan Sekula explores how the archive gains its authority through establishing a science or regulatory system that codifies the body in terms of equivalence. He examines the tensions in nineteenth-century photography, in particular photographic portraiture. This followed aesthetic conventions in presenting the bourgeois self, yet also, drawing on the sciences of physiognomy and phrenology, became an instrument for marking and criminalizing the individual and social body. Photography became harnessed as an apparatus of the state, facilitating the 'arrest of the referent'. Sekula draws on Walter Benjamin's observations on photography, especially his remarks on photographers such as August Sander, whose portraits

could be viewed as a form of 'training manual' (*Übungatlas*) in which the faces are 'being looked at in terms of [their] provenance'.

In *Archive Fever* (1995), Jacques Derrida returns to Freud's 'A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad', linking it with his earlier text 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920) to examine the archival impulse in relation to what Freud saw as the indissociable presence of the death drive in the necessarily repetitive act of recollection. On the premise that there can be no archive without 'consignation in an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction', Derrida argues for an archival desire that seeks to assure a future always threatened by finitude. Later in *Archive Fever* he also reminds us, as do several artists in following texts, that 'there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.'

The third section, *Contestations*, provides a series of commentaries by artists and art historians on uses of the archive from the post 1945 period to the present. Through a study of Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* and Gerhard Richter's album-work *Atlas* (ongoing since 1962), Benjamin Buchloh addresses the role of photography whose condition is seen as archival in both 'enacting and destroying mnemonic experience'. Between these two poles he detects a historical shift from the optimism for modern technologies of reproduction in providing what he characterizes as a 'collective social memory' during the inter-war period to the post-war recognition that this in fact caused 'the destruction of mnemonic experience and of historical thought altogether'. In addressing more broadly the concept of a 'memory crisis', Buchloh advances the idea that mnemonic desire may in fact be 'activated especially in those moments of extreme duress in which the traditional material bonds among subjects, between subjects and objects, and between objects and their representation appear to be on the verge of displacement if not outright disappearance.' From a similar perspective, my essay on photography in post-war Japan explores the differing ways in which particular groups of photographers challenged the role of state media in suppressing the immediate historical trauma of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as much as Japan's defeat and the humiliation of US occupation. In opposition to the uncritical embrace of modernization and a consumer-based culture in which 'collective anomie and amnesia' is implicitly celebrated as constitutive of social progress, these photographers, especially those associated with the Vivo and Provoke groups, created a virtual archive through the book form that documents the fear and anxiety of an emergent urban imaginary. The use of the book as a counter-archival practice with which to document the

current day world of Japan contested the complicity of silence between the media and the state over the aftermath of the war and the effects of industrialization. Parallel to this was the emergence of the artist's book as a medium within European and American art tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s. In 'The Model of the Sciences' (1997), Anne Moeglin-Delcroix assesses the adaptation and critique of models from the human and social sciences as a device of archival documentation in artists' books by European artists such as Boltanski and Bernd and Hilla Becher.

Similarly, the work of Nicole Jolicoeur, discussed by Patricia Levin and Jeanne Perrault, makes a strategic critique of such models of representation, utilized to portray Saint Thérèse of Lisieux in nineteenth-century photography. In ways which are resonant of Sekula's essay, Jolicoeur investigates changes in the institutionalization of the saint's image by re-presenting and defamiliarizing images from previously suppressed photographs of Thérèse Martin as an ordinary woman.

In 'The Archival Impulse' (2004), Hal Foster looks at the contemporary phenomenon of artists-as-archivists, some of whom, in distinction from the subjects analysed by Buchloh, have moved away from a melancholic understanding of culture that views history largely in terms of the legacies of traumatic events. Foster argues that the work of artists such as Tacita Dean, Sam Durant and Thomas Hirschhorn 'assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial or provisional'. For such artists intervention in the archive is a 'gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory', which can harbour the possibility of an unexpected utopian dimension.

Art's potential to open up a world beyond an empirical or manifest order of knowledge is a thread that links the conceptions of a number of artists in this section. Marcel Broodthaers speaks of the importance of the fictive in the gestation of his *Musée d'Art Moderne*, first created in a rudimentary form in 1968, which gradually seemed to detach itself from its maker to take on a life of its own, determined by its situation. The idea of the fictive is also taken up by Margarita Tupitsyn, writing on unofficial art leading up to the perestroika era, which she connects to Foucault's notion of the 'a priori of a history that is given and of things actually said'. Discussing the artists' use of already existing photographic archives, Tupitsyn proposes that their work entails exposing what is suppressed by virtue of what is stated, creating a fictive construction of the real. subREAL (Călin Dan and Josif Kiraly) extend this discussion further by examining the suppression and anxiety surrounding archival records from Romania's recent past. This is based not only on the fear of uncovering 'hidden truths about the other' but also those 'about the self'. Neil Cummings and

Marysia Lewandowska reflect on the need to recover film archives in Poland that are part of the 'cultural memory' of the country. In a number of ways this parallels the archival project of the Hungarian filmmaker and artist Peter Forgacs, begun in 1978. Home and amateur films of middle-class Hungarian Jewry, many of whom perished in the Holocaust, were collected, edited and spliced into films that created a disjunctive narrative, both recovering traces of lost lives and challenging official history. Likewise Cummings and Lewandowska's *Enthusiasm* (2005) is based on Polish amateur films of the socialist era which were state-financed but are now inaccessible to the people. Their aim is to develop a digital and internet 'open source' archive.

The final section, *Retracings*, presents texts that contest not only the dominant construction of the archival as historical record but also its effects. Dragan Kujundzic draws on readings of Freud, Foucault, Agamben and Derrida in 'Archigraphy: On the Future of Testimony and the Archive to Come' (2002). Linking the principle of archivization with the idea of survival, his discussion recalls the importance of the trace as indicative of transience and death while at the same time marking the future. He goes on to discuss two types of 'spectral' testimony, one devastating – the silent testimony of those who are literally unable to speak of what they have endured – the other promising hope: the 'flicker' of computerized archivization when used ethically to prevent catastrophe.

In 'Archives of the Fallen' I briefly describe the practice of three Latin American artists, Rosângela Rennó, Milagros de la Torre and Eugenio Dittborn, each of whom seek to recover photographic traces of the bodies of those consigned to disappear within the archive. They question what photography remembers and forgets, and for whom and for what purpose. In so doing they destabilize its authority as a technology of remembrance. This recalls Foucault's account, in his 'Lives of Infamous Men' (1977), of how towards the end of the seventeenth century an administrative mechanism of registration, in the form of documents and archives, was inaugurated by the state in order to monitor and regulate both the inward and outward lives of citizens. As a state document, the information deposited in the archive became the authorized source of knowledge and legitimate evidence of the existence, identity and status of the individual. Dittborn's text subtly approaches this subject through its description of the subjects of his Airmail Paintings, folded into envelopes and sent out of his country, beyond the containment and anonymity of the official archive. Dittborn's human subjects are revived as a way of challenging the construction of a national identity, a process that entails a cleansing of the records, subject to the authority of the State's archival law. Seen from this perspective, Thomas Hirschhorn's dialogue with Okwui Enwezor on the subject of the memorial offers a parallel critique of the way in which the public monument is normally

imposed by those in power and serves to close down history. Proposing participatory, alternative monuments, Hirschhorn sees an important role for art in reclaiming the world 'according to the biases of individual commitments. It poses the question of ethics. It expresses sadness; it can express what we reject.' The counter-monument or counter-archive is, rather, a form of re-recollection of that which has been silenced and buried. In this sense the work of these artists is anti-monumental, standing against the monumental history of the state.

The implications of this approach towards the archive are strongly argued for by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, notably in 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives' (1985/99), where she returns to the archive to discover how the idea of India itself has been created, as a proper name and as a fiction that inscribes its colonial history, reminding us too of how the conception of the other is defined within the logic of the same. Moreover, she proposes that in so far as the archive has been designated by 'hegemonic nineteenth-century European historiography' as 'a repository of facts', those facts need to be *read*. The archival records of soldiers and administrators construct 'an object of representation', or a 'construction of a fiction whose task was to produce a whole collection of "effects of the real" ... the "misreading" of this "fiction" produced the proper name "India".' One of the values these reflections provide is to pay attention to the question of who constructs the archive, which in this case is those in power. The effect of this is to point back to the legal and juridical role of the archive as composed of evidential traces of that which has taken place.

This recalls a point of common concern between philosophers such as Foucault and Derrida and artists such as Sekula, Dittborn and others, which is also manifest in the more hybrid practice of the Raqs Media Collective, based in New Delhi. A central component of their project is to work with documents and archives in order to establish public networks of dialogue and images addressing issues in postcolonialism and globalization. Referring to the 'First Information Report' prepared by police in India when they receive information about an offence, the collective characterizes these documents as the 'prose of counter-insurgency – a record of a permanent military campaign to subdue a recalcitrant world of discomfiting, incongruous and insurgent realities – to produce in turn, images and representations that are well organized, persuasive, and that conform to the approximation of truth from the perspective of power.' In response to this, the task of their art is to offer counter-readings, to expose the disjunctions and contradictions in such 'representations of the real', or 'reality effects', which they suggest have become more powerfully manifest with the impact of globalization.

This approach towards the archive is also explored, albeit in a very different and specific context, by the Lebanese-born artist Jayce Salloum, in his text 'Sans

titre/Untitled: The Video Installation as an Active Archive' (2006). He describes his use of video to create a kind of 'living archive' that recalls Renée Green's observations. However, for Salloum there is a need to challenge any fixity in the representational form that the documentary genre assumes. He creates a multi-screen form in which both he and participants can explore 'interstitial' spaces – as a 'subjective, political or geographical state' that articulates the conditions of being displaced between 'borders, nationalisms, ideologies, polarities of culture, geography or histories'.

In 'Photographic Documents/Excavation as Art' (2006) Akram Zaatari describes the work of the Arab Image Foundation, based in Beirut, which he co-founded in 1996, and his own work with photographic archives that are composed of family albums and studio photography recording the lives of ordinary individuals and families. Once assembled and surveyed, it becomes evident that there is a very different way of reading these images. Noting that he prefers to work with pre-existing photography, Zaatari suggests an approach that enables the viewer to begin to site and map the forgotten or suppressed micro-histories of twentieth-century Arabic culture.

The Atlas Group (the creation of the artist Walid Ra'ad) is an imaginary non-profit research foundation established in 1976 in Beirut to research and 'document' the contemporary history of Lebanon, especially the civil wars. Through performance, video and photographic-based practice, The Atlas Group seeks to form a counter-archival approach that challenges the very logic of an archival practice that gathers and stores evidence, not in order to provide the basis of juridical proceedings of crimes committed, but rather to contain the truth, reducing events and experiences to statistical data. From being considered the very foundation of our factual knowledge, or a historical account, the archival document is transmuted, in the fictive archives of The Atlas Group, into a 'hysterical symptom', based not on any one person's actual memories but on cultural fantasies spun from the material of collective memories.<sup>1</sup> Reminiscent of the fictions of Jorge Luis Borges, The Atlas Group Archive files, such as those reproduced here, attempt to address the limits of what is thinkable and sayable. At the same time as they open up possibilities for new ways of writing histories, they also intimate that sense of the absurd, the futile, or the impossible, which ultimately haunts the logic of the archive.

1 See The Atlas Group (Walid Ra'ad), 'Let's Be Honest, the Rain Helped: Excerpts from an Interview with the Atlas Group', in *Review of Photographic Memory*, ed. Jalal Toufic (Beirut: Arab Image Foundation, 2004) 44–5; reprinted in this volume, 179–80.



So many years will be spent searching, studying, classifying, before my life is secured, carefully arranged and labelled in a safe place - secure against **theft, fire** and **nuclear war** - from whence it will be possible to take it out and assemble it at any point. Then, being thus assured of never dying, I may finally rest.

#### TRACES

Sigmund Freud A Note upon the Mystic Writing-Pad, 1925//20

Christian Boltanski Research and Presentation of All that Remains of My Childhood 1944-1950, 1969//025

Michel Foucault The Historical *a priori* and the Archive, 1969//026

Andy Warhol The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again), 1975//031

Ilya Kabakov The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away, c. 1977//032

Giorgio Agamben The Archive and Testimony, 1989//038

Susan Hiller Working Through Objects, 1994//041

Renée Green Survival: Ruminations on Archival Lacunae, 2002//049

## Sigmund Freud

### A Note Upon The Mystic Writing-Pad//1925

If I distrust my memory – neurotics, as we know, do so to a remarkable extent, but normal people have every reason for doing so as well – I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing. In that case the surface upon which this note is preserved, the pocket-book or sheet of paper, is as it were a materialized portion of my mnemonic apparatus, which I otherwise carry about with me invisible. I have only to bear in mind the place where this 'memory' has been deposited and I can then 'reproduce' it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory.

If I want to make full use of this technique for improving my mnemonic function, I find that there are two different procedures open to me. On the one hand, I can choose a writing-surface which will preserve intact any note made upon it for an indefinite length of time – for instance, a sheet of paper which I can write upon in ink. I am then in possession of a 'permanent memory-trace'. The disadvantage of this procedure is that the receptive capacity of the writing-surface is soon exhausted. The sheet is filled with writing, there is no room on it for any more notes, and I find myself obliged to bring another sheet into use, that has not been written on. Moreover, the advantage of this procedure, the fact that it provides a 'permanent trace', may lose its value for me if after a time the note ceases to interest me and I no longer want to 'retain it in my memory'. The alternative procedure avoids both of these disadvantages. If, for instance, I write with a piece of chalk on a slate, I have a receptive surface which retains its receptive capacity for an unlimited time and the notes upon which can be destroyed as soon as they cease to interest me, without any need for throwing away the writing-surface itself. Here the disadvantage is that I cannot preserve a permanent trace. If I want to put some fresh notes on the slate, I must first wipe out the ones which cover it. Thus an unlimited receptive capacity and a retention of permanent traces seem to be mutually exclusive properties in the apparatus which we use as substitutes for our memory: either the receptive surface must be renewed or the note must be destroyed.

All the forms of auxiliary apparatus which we have invented for the improvement or intensification of our sensory functions are built on the same model as the sense organs themselves or portions of them: for instance, spectacles, photographic cameras, ear-trumpets. Measured by this standard, devices to aid our memory seem particularly imperfect, since our mental

apparatus accomplishes precisely what they cannot: it has an unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions and nevertheless lays down permanent – even though not unalterable – memory-traces of them. As long ago as in 1900 I gave expression in *The Interpretation of Dreams* to a suspicion that this unusual capacity was to be divided between two different systems (or organs of the mental apparatus). According to this view, we possess a system *Pcpti-Cs.*, which receives perceptions but retains no permanent trace of them, so that it can react like a clean sheet to every new perception; while the permanent traces of the excitations which have been received are preserved in 'mnemonic systems' lying behind the perceptual system. Later, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, I added a remark to the effect that the inexplicable phenomenon of consciousness arises in the perceptual system *instead of* the permanent traces.

Now some time ago there came upon the market, under the name of the 'Mystic Writing-Pad', a small contrivance that promises to perform more than the sheet of paper or the slate. It claims to be nothing more than a writing-tablet from which notes can be erased by an easy movement of the hand. But if it is examined more closely it will be found that its construction shows a remarkable agreement with my hypothetical structure of our perceptual apparatus and that it can in fact provide both an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the notes that have been made upon it.

The Mystic Pad is a slab of dark brown resin or wax with a paper edging; over the slab is laid a thin transparent sheet, the top end of which is firmly secured to the slab while its bottom end rests on it without being fixed to it. This transparent sheet is the more interesting part of the little device. It itself consists of two layers, which can be detached from each other except at their two ends. The upper layer is a transparent piece of celluloid; the lower layer is made of thin translucent waxed paper. When the apparatus is not in use, the lower surface of the waxed paper adheres lightly to the upper surface of the wax slab.

To make use of the Mystic Pad, one writes upon the celluloid portion of the covering-sheet which rests on the wax slab. For this purpose no pencil or chalk is necessary, since the writing does not depend on material being deposited on the receptive surface. It is a return to the ancient method of writing on tablets of clay or wax: a pointed stylus scratches the surface, the depressions upon which constitute the 'writing'. In the case of the Mystic Pad this scratching is not effected directly, but through the medium of the covering-sheet. At the points which the stylus touches, it presses the lower surface of the waxed paper on to the wax slab, and the grooves are visible as dark writing upon the otherwise smooth whitish-grey surface of the celluloid. If one wishes to destroy what has been written, all that is necessary is to raise the double covering-sheet from the wax slab by a light pull, starting from the free lower end. The close contact

between the waxed paper and the wax slab at the places which have been scratched (upon which the visibility of the writing depended) is thus brought to an end and it does not recur when the two surfaces come together once more. The Mystic Pad is now clear of writing and ready to receive fresh notes.

The small imperfections of the contrivance have, of course, no importance for us, since we are only concerned with its approximation to the structure of the perceptual apparatus of the mind.

If, while the Mystic Pad has writing on it, we cautiously raise the celluloid from the waxed paper, we can see the writing just as clearly on the surface of the latter, and the question may arise why there should be any necessity for the celluloid portion of the cover. Experiment will then show that the thin paper would be very easily crumpled or torn if one were to write directly upon it with the stylus. The layer of celluloid thus acts as a protective sheath for the waxed paper, to keep off injurious effects from without. The celluloid is a 'protective shield against stimuli'; the layer which actually receives the stimuli is the paper. I may at this point recall that in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. I showed that the perceptual apparatus of our mind consists of two layers, of an external protective shield against stimuli whose task it is to diminish the strength of excitations coming in, and of a surface behind it which receives the stimuli, namely the system *Pcpt.-Cs.*

The analogy would not be of much value if it could not be pursued further than this. If we lift the entire covering-sheet – both the celluloid and the waxed paper – off the wax slab, the writing vanishes and, as I have already remarked, does not re-appear again. The surface of the Mystic Pad is clear of writing and once more capable of receiving impressions. But it is easy to discover that the permanent trace of what was written is retained upon the wax slab itself and is legible in suitable lights. Thus the Pad provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written, like an ordinary paper pad: it solves the problem of combining the two functions *by dividing them between two separate but interrelated component parts or systems*. But this is precisely the way in which, according to the hypothesis which I mentioned just now, our mental apparatus performs its perceptual function. The layer which receives the stimuli – the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* – forms no permanent traces; the foundations of memory come about in other, adjoining, systems.

We need not be disturbed by the fact that in the Mystic Pad no use is made of the permanent traces of the notes that have been received; it is enough that they are present. There must come a point at which the analogy between an auxiliary apparatus of this kind and the organ which is its prototype will cease to apply. It is true, too, that once the writing has been erased, the Mystic Pad

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OF THEM: FOR INSTANCE  
SPECTACLES, PHOTOGRAPHIC,  
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BY THIS STANDARD, DEVICES TO AID  
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NEVERTHELESS LAYS DOWN PERMANENT  
- EVEN THOUGH NOT UNALTERABLE -  
MEMORY-TRACES OF THEM.

cannot 'reproduce' it from within; it would be a mystic pad indeed if, like our memory, it could accomplish that. Nonetheless, I do not think it is too far-fetched to compare the celluloid and waxed paper cover with the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* and its protective shield, the wax slab with the unconscious behind them, and the appearance and disappearance of the writing with the flickering-up and passing-away of consciousness in the process of perception.

But I must admit that I am inclined to press the comparison still further. On the Mystic Pad the writing vanishes every time the close contact is broken between the paper which receives the stimulus and the wax slab which preserves the impression. This agrees with a notion which I have long had about the method by which the perceptual apparatus of our mind functions, but which I have hitherto kept to myself. My theory was that cathectic innervations are sent out and withdrawn in rapid periodic impulses from within into the completely pervious system *Pcpt.-Cs.* So long as that system is cathected in this manner, it receives perceptions (which are accompanied by consciousness) and passes the excitation on to the unconscious mnemonic systems; but as soon as the cathexis is withdrawn, consciousness is extinguished and the functioning of the system comes to a standstill. It is as though the unconscious stretches out feelers, through the medium of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.*, towards the external world and hastily withdraws them as soon as they have sampled the excitations coming from it. Thus the interruptions, which in the case of the Mystic Pad have an external origin, were attributed by my hypothesis to the discontinuity in the current of innervation; and the actual breaking of contact which occurs in the Mystic Pad was replaced in my theory by the periodic non-excitability of the perceptual system. I further had a suspicion that this discontinuous method of functioning of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time.

If we imagine one hand writing upon the surface of the Mystic Writing-Pad while another periodically raises its covering-sheet from the wax slab, we shall have a concrete representation of the way in which I tried to picture the functioning of the perceptual apparatus of our mind.

Sigmund Freud, 'Notiz über den "Wunderblock"' (1925); trans. 'A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIX: (1923–25) *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1961); revised ed. (London: Vintage, 2001) [footnotes not included] 227–32.

## Christian Boltanski Research and Presentation of All That Remains of My Childhood 1944–1950//1969

We will never realize quite clearly enough what a shameful thing death is. In the end, we never try to fight it head on; doctors and scientists merely establish a pact with it, they fight on points of detail, they slow it down by a few months, a few years, but it all amounts to nothing. What we need to do is attack the roots of the problem in a big collective effort in which each of us will work towards his own survival and everyone else's.

That's why – because one of us has to give an example – I decided to harness myself to the project that's been close to my heart for a long time: preserving oneself whole, keeping a trace of all the moments of our lives, all the objects that have surrounded us, everything we've said and what's been said around us, that's my goal. The task is vast, and my means are frail. Why didn't I start before? Almost everything dealing with the period that I first set about saving (6 September 1944 to 24 July 1950) has been lost, thrown away, through culpable negligence. It was only with infinite difficulty that I was able to find the few elements that I am presenting here. To prove their authenticity, to situate them precisely, all this has been possible only as the result of ceaseless questioning and minutely detailed research.

But the effort still to be made is great. So many years will be spent searching, studying, classifying, before my life is secured, carefully arranged and labelled in a safe place – secure against theft, fire and nuclear war – from whence it will be possible to take it out and assemble it at any point. Then, being thus assured of never dying, I may finally rest.

Christian Boltanski, Flyleaf of artist's book *Recherche et Présentation de tout ce qui reste de mon enfance 1944–1950* (Paris, May 1969); reprinted in *Reconstitution. Christian Boltanski* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery/Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum/Grenoble: Musée de Grenoble, 1990); *Christian Boltanski. Livres* (Paris: Association française d'action artistique/Frankfurt am Main: Portikus/Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1991); trans. Shaun Whiteside, in Didier Semin, Tamar Garb, Donald Kuspit, *Christian Boltanski* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997) 126.

## Michel Foucault

### The Historical *a priori* and the Archive//1969

The positivity of a discourse – like that of Natural History, political economy or clinical medicine – characterizes its unity throughout time, and well beyond individual *oeuvres*, books and texts. This unity certainly does not enable us to say of Linnaeus or Buffon, Quensay or Turgot, Broussais or Bichat, who told the truth, who reasoned with rigour, who conformed to his own postulates; nor does it enable us to say which of these *oeuvres* was closest to a primary, or ultimate, destination, which would formulate most radically the general project of a science. But what it does reveal is the extent to which Buffon and Linnaeus (or Turgot and Quensay, Broussais and Bichat) were talking about 'the same thing', by placing themselves at 'the same level' or at 'the same distance', by deploying 'the same conceptual field', by opposing one another on 'the same field of battle'; and it reveals, on the other hand, why one cannot say that Darwin is talking about the same thing as Diderot, that Laennec continues the work of Van Swieten, or that Jevons answers the Physiocrats. It defines a limited space of communication. A relatively small space, since it is far from possessing the breadth of a science with all its historical development, from its most distant origin to its present stage; but a more extensive space than the play of influences that have operated from one author to another, or than the domain of explicit polemics. Different *oeuvres*, dispersed books, that whole mass of texts that belong to a single discursive formation – and so many authors who know or do not know one another, criticize one another, invalidate one another, pillage one another, meet without knowing it and obstinately intersect their unique discourses in a web of which they are not the masters, of which they cannot see the whole, and of whose breadth they have a very inadequate idea – all these various figures and individuals do not communicate solely by the logical succession of propositions that they advance, nor by the recurrence of themes, nor by the obstinacy of a meaning transmitted, forgotten, rediscovered; they communicate by the form of positivity (and the conditions of operation of the enunciative function) that defines a field in which formal identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, and polemical interchanges may be deployed. Thus positivity plays the roles of what might be called a *historical a priori*.

Juxtaposed these two words produce a rather startling effect; what I mean by the term is an *a priori* that is not a condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements. It is not a question of rediscovering what might legitimize an assertion, but of freeing the conditions of emergence of

statements, the law of their coexistence with others, the specific form of their mode of being, the principles according to which they survive, become transformed and disappear. An *a priori* not of truths that might never be said, or really given to experience; but the *a priori* of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said. The reason for using this rather barbarous term is that this *a priori* must take account of statements in their dispersion, in all the flaws opened up by their non-coherence, in their overlapping and mutual replacement, in their simultaneity, which is not unifiable, and in their succession, which is not deductible; in short, it has to take account of the fact that discourse has not only a meaning or a truth, but a history, and a specific history that does not refer it back to the laws of an alien development. It must show, for example, that the history of grammar is not the projection into the field of language and its problems of a history that is generally that of reason or of a particular mentality. A history in any case that it shares with medicine, mechanical sciences or theology; but that it involves a type of history – a form of dispersion in time, a mode of succession, of stability and of reactivation, a speed of deployment or rotation – that belongs to it alone, even if it is not entirely unrelated to other types of history. Moreover, this *a priori* does not elude historicity: it does not constitute, above events, and in an unmoving heaven, an atemporal structure; it is defined as the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice: but these rules are not imposed from the outside on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect; and if they are not modified with the least of them, they modify them, and are transformed with them into certain decisive thresholds. The *a priori* of positives is not only the system of a temporal dispersion; it is itself a transformable group.

Opposed to the formal *a priori* whose jurisdiction extends without contingency, there is a purely empirical figure; but on the other hand, since it makes it possible to grasp discourses in the law of their actual development, it must be able to take account of the fact that such a discourse, at a given moment, may accept or put into operation, or, on the contrary, exclude, forget or ignore this or that formal structure. It cannot take account (by some kind of psychological or cultural genesis) of the formal *a prioris*; but it enables us to understand how the formal *a prioris* may have in history points of contact, places of insertion, irruption or emergence, domains or occasions of operation, and to understand how this history may be not an absolutely extrinsic contingency, not a necessity of form deploying its own dialectic, but a specific regularity. Nothing, therefore, would be more pleasant, or more inexact, than to conceive of this historical *a priori* as a formal *a priori* that is also endowed with a history: a great, unmoving, empty figure that erupted one day on the surface of time, that exercised over men's thought a tyranny that none could escape, and which then

suddenly disappeared in a totally unexpected, totally unprecedented eclipse: a transcendental syncopation, a play of intermittent forms. The formal *a priori* and the historical *a priori* neither belong to the same level nor share the same nature: if they intersect, it is because they occupy two different dimensions.

The domain of statements thus articulated in accordance with historical *a priori*s, thus characterized by different types of positivity, and divided by distinct discursive formations, no longer has that appearance of a monotonous, endless plain that I have attributed to it at the outset when I spoke of 'the surface of discourse'; it also ceases to appear as the inert, smooth, neutral element in which there arise, each according to its own movement, or driven by some obscure dynamic, themes, ideas, concepts, knowledge. We are now dealing with a complex volume, in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed, in accordance with specific rules and practices that cannot be superposed. Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have, in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*.

By this term I do not mean the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity; nor do I mean the institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation. On the contrary, it is rather the reason why so many things, said by so many men, for so long, have not emerged in accordance with the same laws of thought, or the same set of circumstances, why they are not simply the signalization, at the level of verbal performances, of what could be deployed in the order of the mind or in the order of things; but they appeared by virtue of a whole set of relations that are peculiar to the discursive level; why, instead of being adventurous figures, grafted, as it were, in a rather haphazard way, onto silent processes, they are born in accordance with specific regularities; in short, why, of whom there are things said – and those only – one should seek the immediate reason for them in the things that were said not in them, nor in the men that said them, but in the system of discursivity, in the enunciative possibilities and impossibilities that it lays down. The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together

in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale. The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves, for future memories, its status as an escape; it is that which, at the very root of the statement–event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset *the system of its enunciability*. Nor is the archive that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection; it is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement–thing; it is *the system of its functioning*. Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration.

Between the *language (langue)* that defines the system of constructing possible sentences, and the *corpus* that passively collects the words that are spoken, the *archive* defines a particular level: that of a practice that causes a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated. It does not have the weight of tradition; and it does not constitute the library of all libraries, outside time and place; nor is it the welcoming oblivion that opens up to all new speech the operational field of its freedom; between tradition and oblivion, it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is *the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*.

It is obvious that the archive of a society, a culture or a civilization cannot be described exhaustively; or even, no doubt, the archive of a whole period. On the other hand, it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say – and to itself, the object of our discourse – its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity and disappearance. The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable. It emerges in fragments, regions and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it: at most, were it not for the rarity of the documents, the greater chronological distance would be necessary to analyse it. And yet could this description of the archive be justified, could it elucidate that which makes it possible, map out the place where it speaks, control its rights and duties, test and develop its concepts – at least at this stage of the search, when it can define its possibilities only in the

moment of their realization – if it persisted in describing only the most distant horizons? Should it not approach as close as possible to the positivity that governs it and the archive system that makes it possible today to speak of the archive in general? Should it not illuminate, if only in an oblique way, that enunciative field of which it is itself a part? The analysis of the archive, then, involves a privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us. The description of the archive deploys its possibilities (and the mastery of its possibilities) on the basis of the very discourses that have just ceased to be ours; its threshold of existence is established by the discontinuity that separates us from what we can no longer say, and from that which falls outside our discursive practice; it begins with the outside of our own language (*Langage*); its locus is the gap between our own discursive practices. In this sense, it is valid for our diagnosis. Not because it would enable us to draw up a table of our distinctive features and to sketch out, in advance, the face that we will have in the future. But it deprives us of our continuities; it dissipates that temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history; it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies; and where anthropological thought once questioned man's being or subjectivity, it now bursts open the other, and the outside. In this sense, the diagnosis does not establish the fact of our identity by the play of distinctions. It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, our selves the difference of masks. That difference, far from being the forgotten and recovered origin, is this dispersion that we are and make.

The never completed, never wholly achieved uncovering of the archive forms the general horizon to which the descriptions of discursive formations, the analysis of positivities, the mapping of the enunciative field belong. The right word – which is not that of the philologists – authorizes, therefore, the use of the term *archaeology* to describe all these searches. This term does not imply the search for a beginning; it does not relate analysis to geological excavation. It designates the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence: of the enunciative function that operates within it, of the discursive formation, and the general archive system to which it belongs. Archaeology describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive. [...]

Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969); trans. Alan Sheridan Smith, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications/New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 126–31.

## Andy Warhol

### The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)//1975

[...] I believe that everyone should live in one big empty space. It can be a small space, as long as it's clean and empty. I like the Japanese way of rolling everything up and locking it away in cupboards. But I wouldn't even have the cupboards, because that's hypocritical. But if you can't go all the way and you really feel you need a closet, then your closet should be a totally separate piece of space so you don't use it as a crutch too much. If you live in New York, your closet should be, at the very least, in New Jersey. Aside from the false dependency, another reason for keeping your closet at a good distance from where you live is that you don't want to feel you're living next door to your own dump. Another person's dump wouldn't bother you so much because you wouldn't know exactly what was in it, but thinking about your own closet, and knowing every little thing that's in it, could drive you crazy.

Everything in your closet should have an expiration date on it the way milk and bread and magazines and newspapers do, and once something passes its expiration date, you should throw it out.

What you should do is get a box for a month, and drop everything in it and at the end of the month lock it up. Then date it and send it over to New Jersey. You should try to keep track of it, but if you can't and you lose it, that's fine, because it's one less thing to think about, another load off your mind.

Tennessee Williams saves everything up in a trunk and then sends it out to a storage place. I started off myself with trunks and the odd piece of furniture, but then I went around shopping for something better and now I just drop everything into the same-size cardboard boxes that have a colour patch on the side for the month of the year. I really hate nostalgia, though, so deep down I hope they all get lost and I never have to look at them again. That's another conflict. I want to throw things right out the window as they're handed to me, but instead I say thank you and drop them into the box-of-the-month. But my other outlook is that I really do want to save things so they can be used again someday. [...]

Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Publishers Ltd, 1975) 144–5.

**Ilya Kabakov**

**The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away//c. 1977**

[...] For many years a plumber lived in our apartment. This was known to be a fact, although no one had ever seen him, but the children who misbehaved and ran screaming through the corridor were threatened that he would jump out at any moment and eat them [...]. Once, when it had already got quite cold and it was necessary to check the heat, we were visited by three grease-covered men with wrenches in their hands who demanded that we tell them where the plumber was located. Uncle Misha, who was the chief tenant responsible for the apartment, pointed to the door where the plumber supposedly lived. The door was locked. The grease-covered men were on duty and they had to start up the heat, and since the chief tenants and witnesses were present, it was decided to break down the door, and this was done in an instant.

There was no plumber in the room. The men with the wrenches left, but all those who had entered with Uncle Misha couldn't regain their wits for a long time and stood still, transfixed, looking around in amazement.

The entire room, from floor to ceiling, was filled with heaps of different types of garbage. But this wasn't a disgusting, stinking junkyard like the one in our yard or in the large bins near the gates of our building, but rather a gigantic warehouse of the most varied things, arranged in a special, one might say carefully maintained, order. Flat things formed a pyramid in one corner, all types of containers and jars were placed in appropriate boxes along the walls. In between hanging bunches of garbage stood some sort of shelving, upon which myriad boxes, rags and sticks were set out in strict order ... Almost all the shelves where these things were placed were accurately labelled, and each item had a five- or six-digit number glued on it and a label attached to it from below. There were also lots of things – piles of paper, manuscripts – on a big table standing in the middle of the room, but these didn't have numbers or labels on them yet ... Chief tenant Uncle Misha bent over one of the manuscripts and read 'Garbage' (an article):

**Garbage**

Usually, everybody has heaps of accumulated piles of paper under their table and their desk, magazine and telephone notices which stream into our homes each day. Our home literally stands under a paper rain: magazines, letters, addresses, receipts, notes, envelopes, invitations, catalogues, programmes, telegrams, wrapping paper, and so forth. These streams, waterfalls of paper, we periodically

sort and arrange into groups, and for every person these groups are different: a group of valuable papers, a group for memory's sake, a group of pleasant recollections, a group for every unforeseen occasion – every person has their own principle. The rest, of course, is thrown out on the rubbish heap. It is precisely this division of important papers from unimportant that is particularly difficult and tedious, but everyone knows it is necessary, and after the sorting everything is more or less in order until the next deluge.

But if you don't do these sortings, these purges, and you allow the flow of paper to engulf you, considering it impossible to separate the important from the unimportant – wouldn't that be insanity? When is that possible? It is possible when a person honestly doesn't know which of these papers is important and which is not, why one principle of selection is better than another, and what distinguishes a pile of necessary papers from a pile of garbage.

A completely different correlation arises in his consciousness: should everything, without exception, before his eyes in the form of an enormous paper sea, be considered to be valuable or to be garbage, and then should it all be saved or thrown away? Given such a relationship, the vacillations in making such a choice become agonizing. A simple feeling speaks about the value, the importance of everything. This feeling is familiar to everyone who has looked through or rearranged his accumulated papers: this is the memory associated with all the events connected to each of these papers. To deprive ourselves of these paper symbols and testimonies is to deprive ourselves somewhat of our memories. In our memory everything becomes equally valuable and significant. All points of our recollections are tied to one another. They form chains and connections in our memory which ultimately comprise the story of our life.

To deprive ourselves of all this means to part with who we were in the past, and in a certain sense, it means to cease to exist.

But on the other hand, simple common sense tells us that, with the exception of important papers, memorable postcards and other letters which are dear to the heart, the rest is of no value and is simply rubbish [...] But where does this view come from, cast from the sidelines onto our papers? Why must we agree with this detached view and allow it to determine the suitability or uselessness of these things? Why must we look at our past and not consider it our own, or what is worse, reproach or laugh at it?

Yes, but who can, who has the right to look at my life from the outside, even if that other is me? Why should common sense be stronger than my memories, stronger than all the moments of my life which are attached to these scraps of paper which now seem funny and useless?

Here, of course, one might object that these memories exist only for me, while for others who don't know my memories, these papers are simply trash.



Yes, but why do I have to part with my memories; memories that are contained in such a state of scrap that externally they resemble garbage?

I don't understand this.

Grouped together, bound in folders, these papers comprise the single uninterrupted fabric of an entire life, the way it was in the past and the way it is now. And though inside these folders there appears to be an orderless heap of pulp, for me there is an awful lot in this garbage, almost everywhere. Moreover, strange as it seems, I feel that it is precisely the garbage, that very dirt where important papers and simple scraps are mixed and unsorted, that comprises the genuine and only real fabric of my life, no matter how ridiculous and absurd this may seem from the outside.

Uncle Misha raised his head and, bewildered, looked around the small room. He saw his neighbours swarming in the diverse garbage. He mechanically went up to the shelf where brown folders were tightly packed together, the kind that are usually used for files in book-keeping departments. He pulled out one of these at random and read: 'Garbage Novel', volume XIX. It consisted of carefully bound pieces of paper on which were glued the most diverse nonsense – receipts, envelopes, simple scraps of paper or cardboard, string, etc. Under each scrap there was a number, and above it an asterisk.

Uncle Misha glanced at the back of the book, and saw that the last pages were devoted to commentaries on these scraps of rubbish. So, there was a note corresponding to the tram ticket under No. 8 that read: 'I went to Maria Ignatievna's with things. It was raining and I didn't have a raincoat, I left it at home.' A needle, glued, along with a thread, under No. 48, corresponded to this commentary: 'I found this on 17 February under the table, but I didn't need it any more'... Uncle Misha began to understand what was happening around him. Now, going up to the large bundles of old boots, tin cans and similar junk hanging on long ropes attached to a nail which was driven deep into the wall, he could already guess what might be written on the white square tied to each of these things.

These were also commentaries: under a pair of old shoes was written, 'I took these from Nikolai last year but I didn't return them, I forgot for some reason ...'; under an old rusty can which contained sprats in tomato sauce was this: 'Volodya and I had lunch last year when he was passing through on his way from Voronezh.' For some reason the chief tenant felt not quite himself. He looked around. There was no one left in the room but him. The tenants of the communal apartment, apparently not considering the affairs of the other tenants to be interesting enough, had wandered back to their own corners. The chief tenant also decided to leave quickly, especially since it was getting dark, and less and

less light was penetrating the dusty, though large window of the room. But near the door, struggling through dozens of cardboard boxes filled with innumerable papers, documents, certificates and the like, he found one on which was scribbled: 'Book of Life', volumes XVIII-XXVI. He again stopped near an enormous pile of manuscripts. Having decided to satisfy his curiosity for the last time. Uncle Misha again took out his glasses, leaned over and read the following:

### **A Dump**

The whole world, everything which surrounds me here, is to me a boundless dump with no ends or borders, an inexhaustible, diverse sea of garbage. In this refuse of an enormous city one can feel the powerful breathing of its entire past. This whole dump is full of twinkling stars, reflections and fragments of culture: either some kind of book, or a sea of magazines with photographs and texts, or things once used by someone ... An enormous past rises up behind these crates, vials and sacks; all forms of packaging which were ever needed by man have not lost their shape, they did not become something dead when they were discarded. They cry out about a past life, they preserve it ... And this feeling of a unity of all of that past life, and at the same time this feeling of the separateness of its components, gives birth to an image ... It's hard to say what kind of image this is ... maybe an image of some sort of camp where everything is doomed to perish but still struggles to live; maybe it's an image of a certain civilization slowly sinking under the pressure of unknown cataclysms, but in which nevertheless some sort of events are taking place. The feeling of vast, cosmic existence encompasses a person at these dumps; this is by no means a feeling of neglect, of the perishing of life, but just the opposite – a feeling of its return, a full circle, because as long as memory exists that's how long everything connected to life will live.

... But still, why does the dump and its image summon my imagination over and over again, why do I always return to it? Because I feel that man, living in our region, is simply suffocating in his own life among the garbage since there is nowhere to take it, nowhere to sweep it out – we have lost the border between garbage and non-garbage space. Everything is covered up, littered with garbage – our homes, streets, cities. We have no place to discard all this – it remains near us.

I see all of life surrounding me as consisting of only garbage. Since it just moves from place to place, it doesn't disappear. In the entrance to our building, a person goes downstairs with the garbage pail, losing half of its contents along the way, and he himself can't quite understand where and why he was carrying it, and he throws away the pail, having never reached his goal... And this merging of the two spaces – the place from which garbage must be taken, and the place to which it must be taken – this kind of 'unity of oppositions' which they told us

**The whole world, everything  
which surrounds me here, is to me  
a boundless  
dump with no ends  
or borders, an inexhaustible,  
diverse sea of garbage.  
In this refuse of an enormous  
city one can feel the powerful  
breathing of its entire past.**

**This whole  
dump is full of  
twinkling  
stars,  
reflections  
and fragments  
of culture.**

about when we were still in school, acts as a real unity. How does a building site differ from a rubbish heap? The building across the street has been under construction for eighteen years already, and it is impossible to tell it apart from the ruins of the other buildings which they took down in order to build this new one. This new one, which for a long time now has been a ruin in which some men occasionally swarm about, may at some point be finished, although they say that the blueprints are very outdated and have been redone many times and it even seems that they have been lost, and the first floor is flooded with water ... Looking at it, it is difficult to understand whether it is being built or torn down, and it may be both at the same time ...

Of course, one may look at the whole unity from an optimistic point of view. A dump not only devours everything, preserving it forever, but one might say it also continually generates something: this is where some kinds of shoots come from new projects, ideas, a certain enthusiasm arises, hopes for the rebirth of something, though it is well-known that all of this will be covered with new layers of garbage. [...]

Ilya Kabakov, 'The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away' (Moscow, c. 1977); first published in English in *Ilya Kabakov: Ten Characters* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1989); reprinted in Boris Groys, David. A. Ross, Iwona Blazwick, *Ilya Kabakov* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998) 99–103.

[...] Foucault gives the name 'archive' to the positive dimension that corresponds to the plane of enunciation, 'the general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, 1972, 130). How are we to conceive of this dimension, if it corresponds neither to the archive in the strict sense – that is, the storehouse that catalogues the traces of what has been said, to consign them to future memory – nor to the Babelic library that gathers the dust of statements and allows for their resurrection under the historian's gaze?

As the set of rules that define the events of discourse, the archive is situated between *langue*, as the system of construction of possible sentences – that is, of possibilities of speaking – and the *corpus* that unites the set of what has been said, the things actually uttered or written. The archive is thus the mass of the non-semantic inscribed in every meaningful discourse as a function of its enunciation; it is the dark margin encircling and limiting every concrete act of speech. Between the obsessive memory of tradition, which knows only what has been said, and the exaggerated thoughtlessness of oblivion, which cares only for what was never said, the archive is the unsaid or sayable inscribed in everything said by virtue of being enunciated; it is the fragment of memory that is always forgotten in the act of saying 'I'. It is in this 'historical *a priori*', suspended between *langue* and *parole*, that Foucault establishes his construction site and founds archaeology as 'the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence' (*ibid.*, 131) – that is, as the system of relations between the unsaid and the said in every act of speech, between the enunciative function and the discourse in which it exerts itself, between the outside and the inside of language.

Let us now attempt to repeat Foucault's operation, sliding it towards language (*langue*), thus displacing the site that he had established between *langue* and the acts of speech, to relocate it in the difference between language (*langue*) and archive: that is, not between discourse and its taking place, between what is said and the enunciation that exerts itself in it, but rather between *langue* and its taking place, between a pure possibility of speaking and its existence as such. If enunciation in some way lies suspended between *langue* and *parole*, it will then be a matter of considering statements not from the point of view of actual discourse, but rather from that of language (*langue*); it will be a question of looking from the site of enunciation not towards an act of speech,

but towards *langue* as such: that is, of articulating an inside and an outside not only in the plane of language and actual discourse, but also in the plane of language as potentiality of speech.

In opposition to the *archive*, which designates the system of relations between the unsaid and the said, we give the name *testimony* to the system of relations between the inside and the outside of *langue*, between the sayable and the unsayable in every language – that is, between a potentiality of speech and its existence, between a possibility and an impossibility of speech. To think a potentiality in act as *potentiality*, to think enunciation on the plane of *langue* is to inscribe a caesura in possibility, a caesura that divides it into a possibility and an impossibility, into a potentiality and an impotentiality; and it is to situate a subject in this very caesura. The archive's constitution presupposed the bracketing of the subject, who was reduced to a simple function or an empty position; it was founded on the subject's disappearance into the anonymous murmur of statements. In testimony, by contrast, the empty place of the subject becomes the decisive question. It is not a question, of course, of returning to the old problem that Foucault had sought to eliminate, namely, 'How can a subject's freedom be inserted into the rules of a language?' Rather, it is a matter of situating the subject in the disjunction between a possibility and an impossibility of speech, asking, 'How can something like a statement exist in the site of *langue*? In what way can a possibility of speech realize itself as such?' Precisely because testimony is the relation between a possibility of speech and its taking place, it can exist only through a relation to an impossibility of speech – that is, only as *contingency*, as a capacity not to be. This contingency, this occurrence of language in a subject, is different from actual discourse's utterance or non-utterance, its speaking or not speaking, its production or non-production as a statement. It concerns the subject's capacity to have or not to have language. The subject is thus the possibility that language does not exist, does not take place – or, better, that it takes place only through its possibility of not being there, its contingency. The human being is the speaking being, the living being who has language, because the human being is capable of *not having* language, because it is capable of its own infancy. Contingency is not one modality among others, alongside possibility, impossibility, and necessity: it is the actual giving of a possibility, the way in which a potentiality exists as such. It is an event (*contingit*) of a potentiality as the giving of a caesura between a capacity to be and a capacity not to be. In language, this giving has the form of subjectivity. Contingency is possibility put to the test of a subject.

In the relation between what is said and its taking place, it was possible to bracket the subject of enunciation, since speech had already taken place. But the relation between language and its existence, between *langue* and the archive,

demands subjectivity as that which, in its very possibility of speech, bears witness to an impossibility of speech. This is why subjectivity appears as *witness*; this is why it can speak for those who cannot speak. Testimony is a potentiality that becomes actual through an impotentiality of speech; it is, moreover, an impossibility that gives itself existence through a possibility of speaking. These two movements cannot be identified either with a subject or with a consciousness; yet they cannot be divided into two incommunicable substances. Their inseparable intimacy is testimony. [...]

Giorgio Agamben, 'The Archive and Testimony', *Quel che resta di Auschwitz* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1989); trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Remnants of Auschwitz* (New York: Zone Books, 1999) 143–6.

**Susan Hiller**

## **Working Through Objects//1994**

Working in the Freud Museum has been one of the most interesting things I've been involved in for a long time. Most spaces that one is allowed to inhabit temporarily as an artist are either 'neutral' spaces designated for art and thus marginalized in some way, or – particularly in Europe – derelict spaces: dead factories or abandoned warehouses. The Freud Museum, of course, is quite different. This is a space which was a family home and has become a museum – or a shrine, depending on how you look at it – and which itself houses the collection of the original inhabitant. So it has layers and layers and layers of meaning in the present, as well as a very significant past.

Now my own experience here has been intense, probably because working here has made me think again about issues I thought I had resolved and look at a set of histories I thought I had already rejected. I felt I was constrained to confine my intervention to the room where you now see the installation; this may have been partially an imagined constraint, but nevertheless I felt that my work in the space would be bounded geographically by that room. I also felt that in order to use that room I had only two options: using or not using the existing large vitrine. And if I had not used it, I would have had to block off an entire wall, transform the entire architecture of the room, and in a sense falsify the proposition that the room was offering. Therefore it became a vitrine piece, but my series of boxes was begun quite a while before the vitrine itself became a possibility; when I was first informed of the vitrine I knew immediately that this location would help me to finish the piece of work that had begun long ago in my mind and which I thought might go on for ever.

The limitation of confining my installation to an oversize vitrine in fact became a great opportunity, because I have discovered that when things are condensed or constrained like this, people will involve themselves in a more careful, slow, and intimate way than they do when they come into a space to see an art installation which perhaps has spread itself out in a large room where it is perfectly possible to stand in the doorway and take a mental snapshot of the geography of the space and not get at all involved with the items positioned within it. In fact, and perhaps unconsciously, some artists now make installations that can be summarized quite easily in a snapshot view. The situation here is very different. We are all well trained to go image by image or item by item through a museum case, and people seem to keep this habit of careful viewing when they come to see my collection. So I have had very full

responses from people in detail about each of the boxes in the vitrine, which is a very unusual response for an artist to receive.

I take it that any conscious configuration of objects tells a story. In fact, this is something I've believed for a very long time. In the early seventies I made a collection piece called *Enquiries/Inquiries*, which revealed quite explicitly, although drily, in the style of the seventies, that any collection of objects was an ambiguously bounded unit that told a particular story, and it was by setting the boundaries that the story was told.

If you think about the narrative that collections or assemblages of things make, the interesting thing is that there are always at least two possible stories: one is the story that the narrator, in this case the artist, thinks she's telling – the story-teller's story – and the other is the story that the listener is understanding, or hearing, or imagining on the basis of the same objects. And there would be always at least these two versions of whatever story was being told. This is why I value the comments I hope you'll make later on, so I can get some sense of what it is you think the story is. I have a pretty clear idea myself of my side of the story.

Each box I've made and positioned in the vitrine seems to me to be part of a process which is actually very dreamlike. I'm again using the notion of dream in several senses. If you think of Freud's notion of the dream as a narrative that had both a manifest and a hidden content, this might have something to do with the relationship between the story told by the story-teller and the story that was being heard. I tried to make my boxes exemplify that kind of approach, so that they present the viewer with a word (each is titled), a thing or object, and an image or text or chart, a representation. And the three aspects hang together (or not) in some kind of very close relationship which might be metaphoric or metonymic or whatever. There could be a number of different kinds of relationships among those three aspects. The 'meaning' of the entire bounded unit, of each box, would need to be investigated by seeing the relationship between the word, the picture and the objects, as well as by the placement of an individual box in an extensive series of boxes.

Now in the Freud Museum we already have a complex situation. We have a family house within which is Freud's own museum collection. To situate another collection here is bound to be make it available to be read in the context of the primary collection. This brings me back to what I said initially about coming to terms with certain histories, with, if you like, 'the father', here literally in the house of the father. The hauntedness of this for me has to do first of all with my own gendered position as an artist. Also, as I discovered, it has to do with issues around ethnic identity, because my own family background has very much a similar trajectory to the Freud family background, and I found this extremely peculiar and resonant and personally difficult as well as interesting. Through

this I discovered the continual abrasiveness of that particular ethnicity within European culture. In an art world within which ethnic identity is now one of the modes, if you like, of acceptable self-presentation which is valued, yet there remain certain ethnicities which are always politically incorrect. This was an interesting and explosive issue to deal with.

At first I saw that if I were going to compare my assortment of things with Freud's, there were some easy differences that one could name. For example, Freud had beautiful, classic objects which although not immensely expensive at the time he bought them, were still rare and valuable enough. Everything in my collection is either something that's been thrown away or is rubbish, of no value. The only value these things have is that I have assigned some kind of value to them. So immediately I could say that Freud is an early modernist with antiquarian taste and my collection is obviously very postmodern – fragments and ruins and discards, appropriations, etc. So that seemed a good starting point.

The more I thought about it, the more I needed to think through the idea of collecting. A deeper, more distanced view reveals that the objects I have collected are constant evocations of mortality and death, which of course could also be said of the objects in Freud's collection and perhaps in all collections.

So there is a kind of circularity that I have discovered in my entire project. Any idea that I might have had about destabilizing the notion of collecting seems to me fairly superficial at this stage, and I certainly wouldn't have discovered these maybe deeper things, if I hadn't had the opportunity to work it all out through collecting these objects in the context of this museum.

Just as we could say that the existence of our dream life is a continual *memento mori* and at the same time an approach to immortality, since dreaming seems to have nothing to do with the necessities of physical existence – so collecting may be the same kind of complex activity. It seems to be on the one hand the kind of sheer accumulating process that all children enjoy, you know, a collection of dolls or little cars or comic books or anything like that, and then after that initial kind of accumulation children go into the sorting process in typologies, putting all the green pencils to one side and the red pencils, all the Superman comic books and all the Spiderman comic books, making categories and then some kind of analysis of these categories and all of that. It is a very pleasurable kind of thing, and certainly most people have done that, and then later at a certain point you just chuck out all your collections. Usually, you might keep your stamp collection because your parents tell you it is worth money, or something like that. But you are fed up with all that. You will tend to continue to define yourself by accumulating objects, but in sets which are not really perceived as collectible units. That is, you furnish a home or you buy clothes, but when you arrange your clothes you don't put all the red things together and all

the green things together. In other words, what seems to come to an end isn't the act of collecting but the process of analysing, sorting and creating a typology that is given up, because we certainly go on accumulating objects which give our lives meaning. So I am maintaining that the process of being a conscious collector is very similar to that initial childhood collecting. If you take a real collector – what I call a real collector like Freud, who annotated very carefully the date, the provenance, the price of each object that he acquired in a very orderly and precise way – you can see that there is a tremendous pleasure there, an intelligent pleasure in this kind of acquisitive activity. The decision that Freud made to place all of his objects in his working space, to create an ambiance that was very different from the domestic setting, so that everything he looked at in his office and consulting room was basically from a tomb, connected with a dead body or a vanished civilization ... Well, I think for me it would be a very difficult situation to try to work at a desk cluttered with these immensely resonant and haunted objects, and yet I realize I am doing the same thing in my own way. So I am trying to seek immortality and meaning through objects, and at the same time I am trying to say that my own process of accumulation is really quite analysed and thought through, and in fact is a critical homage to Freud and a form of seeing through and working through. It has a double edge.

First I'd like to talk about the archaeological metaphor in my installation and to attempt very briefly to evoke a trace of something of Freud's use of this metaphor, or more accurately of my view of his use of it. Obviously, when you look at Freud's collection of artefacts you see how important a certain notion of the past was to him. He of course said explicitly that the psychoanalyst, like the archaeologist, was reconstructing a past through excavating fragments. He went on to say that the psychoanalyst was, in fact, privileged over the archaeologist in this sense – that the analyst would discover a truth that was more profound, because none of the fragments would have been lost or destroyed, since the mind never loses any memories. For me, having been trained in archaeology, I know archaeology doesn't necessarily tell any truth. It's a series of fictions, like any narration. We have a choice among these histories and fictions. Of course, Freud had a different notion of science than we would have nowadays, of its offering the possibility of a unitary truth. This must have been helpful to him in giving him a kind of certainty within which to locate his practice.

I suppose I see psychoanalysis as more poetic than scientific, and in fact I don't even see a dichotomy between science and poetry. So I don't see any reason why I would have to establish my credentials as an ex-anthropologist or archaeologist in order to even talk about these things. However, my notion of art practice is an encompassing one. And my remarks around all of this are to situate the collection I've made within a discourse in which we could allow

narratives of an archaeological nature to occur. One reason for raising the issues around archaeology is to let you know that the boxes I've used in my collection are archaeological collecting boxes, which may not be immediately apparent. When archaeologists do their fieldwork they carefully place all the interesting things found in a 'neutral' box. Then a series of hands-on acts transpires: sorting, cleaning, putting into plastic bags, reading, making notes and maps, even repairing – I always enjoyed these activities. Out of them come typologies and chronologies. So by putting the remnants that I collect into these boxes I'm using the box as a frame to draw attention to something placed within it. Of course, a box isn't a frame, it's a space; and in that sense everything that I've done in each box is an installation within an installation. We're in a private home that houses a collection that had been annotated and dealt with in a scholarly way by Freud, and the house itself today is a collection of objects; even its ordinary furniture has now become museum objects. A box within a vitrine within a room within this institutional space within this house – one is attempting to carve out a space in which something else can happen, to make some kind of intervention. So I've got a situation where I've used a pre-existent vitrine which needed to be remade entirely, shelves, lighting, everything – but in order to look almost exactly as it did before... Embedded in all this I've placed my practice of working through objects.

I thought I should say one or two things about one or two of the boxes to give some idea of how they put themselves together.

I'll start with one called *Cowgirl*, because that image of the cowgirl has become a sort of logo for my exhibition. The box starts with two cow-creamers, my attraction/repulsion for them. It's important in connection with these objects that I never heard a woman called a 'cow' until I came to England, so this is a box about sexual insult and my reaction to it. The word 'cowgirl' puts the two terms together, and I came across an old photograph of a famous woman outlaw/cowgirl; in the American West all the famous outlaws and criminals posed for their photographs, and Jennie Metcalf was no different. She had herself photographed in her outlaw gear, and she's got a gun, a big pistol. Of course this image was a totally irresistible Freudian pun, and to insert it in the Freud Museum seemed to me at first very witty. On that level I didn't see any more in it. I put it together with the two cow-creamers (we call them creamers in the USA, here they're called milkjugs, I know that, and it's interesting that both terms have sexual connotations) and what I want to point out about them to you is that they vomit milk, which makes them fascinating cultural artefacts. I always think that the so-called innocence of artefacts is just a way of letting ourselves as a culture get away with quite a lot while pretending we don't know what we're saying. So putting these china cows together with this armed cowgirl in the Freud museum seemed to me a way of dealing with sexual insult, and

there was particular pleasure for me in situating this in the house of the father.

Perhaps a sense begins to emerge of how they came together for me and how I think they narrate themselves. The objects within each box were the starting-points; the framing of the objects, the finding of the right word or words and the finding of the image, map, text, diagram or whatever, was a way of contextualizing the objects, not to limit their meanings but to open them out to these symbolic links along the themes I've mentioned.

One box that someone asked me about because I apparently misspelled the word that titles it, and I do admit I have a real block about this word – the word is *Führer* – there's a box of that title, misspelled *Führer*. You would think I would have noticed it, which I didn't until it was pointed out to me. But in a way I am sort of glad that that happened, because all the objects that I have accumulated are things which are very very disturbing to me, and in a way by making this kind of mistake it indicates that the disturbance is quite real and I am not just putting it on for benefit of actually exhibiting it, if you see what I mean. So I think I have to say something about this box. The box contains a book I found on a rubbish skip and I had it bound. The book was published in Germany and it is a tragic compilation of the history of the Jews from the beginning, from Abraham, up until the year of publication, 1935. It ends there. You can see the relevance of that to the exile of the Freud family, the fact that they needed to leave Austria and come to England.

It's an astonishing book because the format is such that when you open it, you can pull out accordion-like pages that extend to become enormous charts that open and open and open. And that's another thing about the boxes: as objects they exist closed, and you have to make a deliberate act of opening them, just as you do with a book. Displayed like this, they're rather naked. But at the same time this display is limiting, because in many cases the boxes contain books which are meant to be taken out of the boxes, and read. Likewise, the slides are meant to be viewable, etc. So with the *Führer* box you would be able to open the book which is in the box, and open the large charts – the book, which is about half an inch thick, in fact has a format that expands itself greatly. In the Introduction, which I've had translated and placed in the lid of the box, it says that 'This book is intended to give the Jewish people pride in their history and confidence for the future.' Of course, written in those years, it has a terrible irony. The woman who translated it for me said 'there's something intriguing here, the word *Führer* is used in the final sentence', and I asked what the actual meaning of the word was, and as some of you know, it means guide. So Hitler was actually called 'guide'. Now in 1935 the person writing this Introduction must have been using a coded language, so that when he writes 'May this book be a good guide for you on the paths of life', there is implied a reference to the

bad guide, if you like. And the accession of Hitler to power is in fact documented within the book, because it documents, alongside facts of Jewish history and culture, the main historical developments within Western society, including 'Adolf Hitler comes to power', 'burning of the Reichstag', etc., it's all there towards the end of the book. So all these layers within layers make this particular artefact very haunting to me. I called the box *Führer* because it all pivots on this notion of the idea of a guide.

Well, I'll say something about the 'Look homeward, angel' box, do you remember it, the one called *Heimlich*? Many of the boxes use words from other languages, which is to give a sense of being outside the discourse, unless you speak the language. I've used some native American terms, Hebrew, classical Greek, Latin, German, French, etc. This is another German one, and it's kind of a homage to Freud, one of several boxes that make explicit reference to themes in his work. *Heimlich*, as those of you familiar with Freud's writings on the uncanny will know, is a very important word with reference to the German word *unheimlich*, un-homelike, which is translated into English as 'uncanny'. *Heimlich* means homelike, homely, cosy, from the word *heim*, home. But in Freud's essay on the uncanny he says something that in English seems very paradoxical, that the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* are very close. If you look up *heimlich* in a German-English dictionary, what you find is that it says 'homelike', 'homely', 'cosy', 'comfortable', then goes on to 'private', 'secretive', 'furtive', 'hidden', 'forbidden', a range of suggestions about what goes on and is protected within the home, within the family, and you suddenly get to the *unheimlich* without any break. You're led from cosy to incest. All those meanings of home exist in English, but not explicitly, and our word 'uncanny' doesn't relate to any root of 'home'.

In the box is a little 45 rpm record I've kept for years and years, of a song called 'Look homeward, angel' sung by Johnnie Ray. Most of you are too young to recall this, which was one of the very angst-inducing songs of my teenage years. *Look Homeward, Angel* is actually the title of a novel by an American writer called Thomas Wolfe, at that time a very famous regional writer. The angel referred to in the book's title is an angel in a graveyard. And the home referred to obliquely is obviously death. Of course this is not said explicitly in the song. So all the teenage girls were swooning while Johnnie Ray sang 'Look homeward, angel', a song about death under the guise of love or desire ...

So I don't really want to say much more about that or any of the other boxes except to say that each of them is put together along the same sorts of lines – following through on a set of personal associations which initially for me were embedded in the objects. I started with these objects, some of which are objects that I have kept for years, little unimportant things, souvenirs if you like, with a lot of personal resonance. Of course I didn't know what the resonance was. I just

knew that I was somehow stuck with these things and I never wanted to throw them out. So I started to look into what the resonance of each thing might be for me, and then each got its place in a box and eventually I added appropriate contextualizing material, a title, an annotation and a date like a real collector would, and that is my collection.

Susan Hiller, 'Working Through Objects', text edited by Barbara Einzig from transcripts of three informal talks and subsequent discussions [here the talk section of the text only is included] at the Freud Museum, London, on the occasion of the artist's installation there (22–24 April, 1994), in *Thinking About Art: Conversations with Susan Hiller*, ed. Barbara Einzig (Manchester, England, and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996) 226–34.

## Renée Green

### Survival: Ruminations on Archival Lacunae//2002

#### 1. Everything/nothing: negation in abundance

Upon reading about archives the above sub-heading came to mind. Particular examples of attempts at collecting and the subsequent ordering of masses of material – including fictive attempts – led to a feeling not merely of wonder, but also of fatigue, attention deficit. Negation in abundance can be read as the cancelling-out effect which is possible when confronted with more than is comprehensible, that which is mind numbing, more than one can bear. It can also be read as a multitude of negation, many minuses. What I'm referring to as a cancelling-out effect can also be thought of in relation to absences, lacunae, holes which occur in the midst of densities of information, as well as amidst their lack. The lacunae referred to in this text are those which allude to that which is beyond understanding, and understanding can be thought here in terms of how it might be possible to perceive as well as the boundaries of such perception. It is exactly at these locations of limit and even fatigue where it may be necessary to search. What impossibility is faced beyond the more superficial fatigue?

A strain which recurs in my work has involved the probing of in-between spaces, which can appear to be holes, aporias, absences. For example between what is said and what can be comprehended; between an event and its reinterpretation; that which takes place between the process of importing and exporting products, people, ideas; between organizing systems and their confoundation; between what is seen and what is believed; between what is heard and what is felt.

[...]

#### Materiality, absence and decay: some reflections

##### A. *Partially Buried in Three Parts*

(Surplus in locations of absence – finding what isn't being sought)

Document: *Partially Buried in Three Parts* description (1999)

This work which consists of *Partially Buried*, *Übertragen /Transfer*, and *Partially Buried Continued* – each of which are also videos – began with a reflection upon a work by the artist Robert Smithson which was primarily known as a photograph and believed no longer to exist physically. The three parts grew out of a consideration of the year 1970 and the associations became denser in the



process of working.

*Partially Buried in Three Parts* involves a web of genealogical traces which are probed through the notions of sites of memory as well as site-specific work. Each part is an overlapping exploration of ways in which we attempt to reinterpret the past as well as our contemporary relations to a natal *patria*. The artist asks what the notion of 'site' or 'non-site' could mean today when the idea of location is effected for many by circuit relations, meaning that a sense of place and time can depend largely on where one's computer screen is and when memory is heavily mediated for some by computer storage capacity. How are the 'returns of what is repressed' mediated and how do they erupt? The concept of being an 'American artist' and the notion of national identities and cultural predilections being conflated; entropy, memory, and its contradictions, memorials and monuments, nostalgia, and 'radical' change repeated as style are all ideas which circulate in this work.

The three parts have in common references to the 1970s, a time in which the artist was a child growing up in Ohio. In 1970 Robert Smithson produced his site-specific work *Partially Buried Woodshed* at Kent State University in Ohio. In May of 1970 four students were shot while attending a rally protesting the US invasion of Cambodia. 'May 4, 1970' was painted on the *Partially Buried Woodshed* shortly afterwards and the artwork took on another meaning.

Part two (*Übertragen/Transfer*) explores the relationship between how the US was imagined from afar as well as how the time around 1970 is imagined by several people of German descent who now live in the US. Since 1991 the artist has lived and worked between the US and Germany. In *Übertragen/Transfer* she attempts to imagine the possibility of a 'cosmopolitan patriot' as suggested by Kwame Anthony Appiah: 'The favourite slander of the narrow nationalist against us cosmopolitans is that we are rootless: what my father believed in, however, was a rooted cosmopolitanism, or, if you like, a cosmopolitan patriotism. Like Gertrude Stein, he thought there was no point in roots if you couldn't take them with you. "America is my country and Paris is my hometown", Stein said. The musings over 'natal *patria*' continue: How does one return? To a country, to a place of birth? To a location which reeks of remembered sensations? But what are these sensations? Is it possible to trace how they are triggered and why they are accompanied with as much dread as anticipation?' (From *Partially Buried*)

Part three (*Partially Buried Continued*) focuses on the mingling of past and present, the near and far, what is other and what is one's self, through reflecting on the photographic medium via the re-examination of images taken during the Korean War, viewed by the artist as a child, and photographs taken in Kwangju on 18 May 1980, and photographs taken by the artist in Kwangju and Seoul in 1997. Questions of genealogy are continued with the juxtaposition of

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artistic forebears, in this case Smithson and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and blood relations. The complexities of how we find ourselves entangled in relationships to countries, nationalities and people, to locations and to time, and to the ensuing identifications – these aspects continue to be questioned in this work.

The notion of surplus in the locations of assumed absence is a current which runs through the different parts of this work. This surplus is related to that which survives, whether this be in a material form, one which might change over time and appear as a ruin, as indicated by the *Partially Buried Woodshed*, and also the perceptual changes which arise over time as all of those who were interviewed allude to. Emotional fullness connected to historically repressed or contested documentation can arise. What other possibilities for reflection emerge where what appears to be decay can be viewed as transmutating traces, shifting remains?

B. *Some Chance Operations* (archival form in ruin: film as a convincing and porous container)

Document: *Known only from photographs* (1998)

Exploring presence in what appears to be absence is a crucial link between *Some Chance Operations* and the previous works comprising *Partially Buried in Three Parts* (1996–97). An intersection of references occurs between *Partially Buried* (1996) and *Partially Buried Continued* (1997). These previous associations are combined with references to *Dictée*, the book of writing by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, which moves back and forth between languages and locations; the space between the Vietnam war and the Korean war is also considered; and in *Some Chance Operations* (1998–99) the missing and remaining filmic corpus of Elvira Notari is explored. The exhibition project at the Vienna Secession in part involved tracing what Giuliana Bruno (author of *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and The City Films of Elvira Notari*) has described as paratexts, peritexts, and hypotexts (film stills, photographs, written synopses, reviews) of the filmmaker Elvira Notari's oeuvre, which is predominantly lost, and thinking about the history of cinema, and in turn of film as an archival medium, from which many aspects of cinema history and recorded images have been lost.

What happens when the archive disappears? How do we retain access to memory and history? What does an archive allow? How can archives, history, and memory be thought of now in this time of designated endings: century's end, decade's end, millennium's end? How are we affected by chance circumstances, such as being born in a certain place at a certain time to certain parents? What systems do we rely upon and methods do we develop for coping with uncertainty as well as for organizing our lives? In what ways are what we

remember, memorialize, organize and archive predicated on chance operations?

The fame of heroes owes little to the extent of their conquests and all the success of the tributes paid to them. The *Iliad* counts for more than Agamemnon's war; the steles of the Chaldes for more than the armies of Nineveh. Trajan's Column, *La Chanson de Roland*, the murals depicting the Armada, the Vendôme column – all the images of wars have been created after the battles themselves thanks to looting or the energy of artists, and left standing thanks to oversight on the part of rain or rebellion. But what survives is the evidence, rarely accurate but always stirring, vouchsafed to the future by the victors.

(Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, 1986)

A to Z, twenty-six locations to put everything, presumably (*Between and Including*, wall text)

In the installation and video-film *Some Chance Operations*, two seemingly unrelated forms, cinema and the alphabet, are juxtaposed. The alphabet is a structuring device composed of units which are assembled together. It is one of the first things one learns in order to allow entrance into the world of language and into the social world. It becomes a form of ordering (to make words for example) as well as a way to index and assign meaning for that which will be stored, as in an archive or in an encyclopaedia or a warehouse. Film is also a memory receptacle: in its most literal sense it is a recorder of the light upon emulsion, indexically tracing what was at one time present, to its function as a stimulator of memory associated with the images projected from it. Film has also been referred to as a language. The movement of each frame at a particular speed is one aspect of the structure of film which creates effects analogous to reality. Many people's earliest recollections now include films and TV or films on TV or played by VCRs. Memories include social and private recollections – how old I was, who I was with, where I was. Films themselves now serve an indexing function to assist in gaining access to memory. The way in which we come to understand films is often taken for granted now, but there was a time when the structure of this 'language' was first being tested. From still image to moving image to moving image with sound; from black and white to hand-colouring to colour film to the current colourizations of black and white films. As the technology has shifted the mourning of different film eras has ensued, as well as an increased amount of language produced about film. Rather than solely life becoming an index of film, in many ways film has become an index of life, including dream and fantasy life ...

In this work there are attempts to reflect on a combination of ways of coping

with life (which is what usually appears in movies) by demonstrating forms of escape and an idiosyncratic ordering of fragments from what can be considered an unpredictable and even crazy world. The artist follows different chance circumstances diligently with operations which demonstrate bizarre forms of logic, ordering and copying. From creating a cinephile's lair to re-indexing film stills from film encyclopaediae, the compulsive activities demonstrate the lack of definitiveness of all A to Z accounts, yet allude to the fascinating possibilities for further searching which following these ordering systems can generate.

The work also references artistic forebears. It is a homage to, and test of, earlier conceptual strategies used in art and film. In continuing to think of the time in which these ideas emerged (1960s and 1970s) she reflects on the desire for system approaches and their variations (including back to basics notions combined with a reverence for Buckminster Fuller and Marshall McLuhan, as is found in the *Whole Earth Catalog* from 1970) amidst a time of immense change. Why did many conceptual artists seem so enamoured of presenting orders to be followed by themselves and others? How can this rigour be historicized now when those times are fading further away in terms of living memories and while those then young now face ageing or are already dead? What kinds of memorials begin to appear to prevent the past from being buried? What residue of these practices is apparent? How can a relationship with the past exist in which memory functions as an active process, allowing continual reconsideration, rather than as a form of entombment, to which archives and museums are sometimes compared? [...]

### Remains, residue, remnant

remains: *n.pl.* 1. what remains after other parts have been removed or used, etc. 2. relics of antiquity, esp. of buildings. 3. dead body.

residue: *n.* 1. what is left over or remains; remainder. 2. what remains of an estate after the payment of charges, debts and bequests.

remnant: *n.* 1. small remaining quantity. 2. piece of cloth, etc., left when the greater part has been used or sold. [dictionary entries]

The fact that the subject of testimony – indeed, that all subjectivity, if to be a subject and to bear witness are in the final analysis one and the same – is a remnant ... They ['processes of subjectification and desubjectification, of the living being's becoming speaking and the speaking being's becoming living and, more generally, toward historical processes'] have not an end, but a remnant. There is no foundation in or beneath them; rather, at their centre lies an irreducible disjunction in which each term, stepping forth in the place of a

remnant, can bear witness. (Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 159)

To be a subject and to bear witness are the same and that same is a remnant. Not an end, but a remnant. Yet each term (processes of subjectification and desubjectification) in the process of moving toward the place of a remnant – that 'small remaining quantity' after so much has been used or sold – is engaged in an ongoing mobile process, whereby the subject can bear witness. This suggests dynamism, something never settled, but continuous.

As *Remnants of Auschwitz* leaves in place of a remnant the words of *Muselmänner*, the complete witnesses, in place of a remnant of this rumination Agamben's words are left to bear witness to this ongoing accretive process:

If we now return to testimony, we may say that to bear witness is to place oneself in one's own language in the position of those who have lost it, to establish oneself in a living language as if it were dead, or in a dead language as if it were living – in any case, outside both the archive and the corpus of what has already been said. It is not surprising that the witness' gesture is also that of the poet, the *auctor par excellence*. Hölderlin's statement that 'what remains is what the poets found' (*Was bleibt, stiften die Dichter*) is not to be understood in the trivial sense that poets' works are things that last and remain throughout time. Rather, it means that the poetic word is the one that is always situated in the position of a remnant and that can, therefore, bear witness. Poets – witnesses – found language as what remains, as what actually survives the possibility, or impossibility, of speaking. (Agamben, *op. cit.*, 161)

Due to space limitations it was not possible to include the full text, which reflects the process of re-reading in relation to encountering new readings and the ongoing process of raising questions which serve as indications for further thought. It juxtaposes throughout quotations from and references to Giorgio Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* with reflections on the artist's projects – not with the intent of explicating Agamben's text, but rather as a provisional attempt to put some ideas and processes of thought and production in relation to each other. (Renée Green, 2006)

Renée Green, 'Survival: Ruminations on Archival Lacunae'; *Interarchive. Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Diethelm Stoller, Ulf Wuggenig (Lüneberg: Kunstraum der Universität; Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2002) 147; 149–51; 152.

THE CENTRAL ARTEFACT OF THIS  
SYSTEM IS NOT THE CAMERA BUT  
THE FILING CABINET

## INSCRIPTIONS

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**Walter Benjamin**  
**A Short History of Photography//1931**

[...] Just as 70 years later Utrillo painted his fascinating views of Paris not from life but from picture postcards, so did the highly regarded English portrait painter David Octavius Hill base his fresco of the first general synod of the Church of Scotland in 1843 on a long series of portrait photographs. But these pictures he took himself. And it is they, unpretentious makeshifts meant for internal use, that gave his name a place in history, while as a painter he is forgotten. Admittedly a number of his studies lead even deeper into the new technology than this series of portraits: anonymous images, not posed subjects. Such figures had long been known in painting. Where the painting remained in the possession of a particular family, now and then someone would ask after the originals. But after two or three generations this interest fades; the pictures, if they last, do so only as testimony to the art of the painter. With photography, however, we encounter something new and strange: in Hill's Newhaven fishwife, her eyes cast down in such indolent, seductive modesty, there remains something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art, something that cannot be silenced, that fills you with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in *art*. 'And I ask: how did the beauty of that hair, those eyes, beguile our forebears: how did that mouth kiss, to which desire curls up senseless as smoke without fire.' Or you turn up the picture of Dauthendey the photographer, the father of the poet, from the time of his engagement to that woman whom he then found one day, shortly after the birth of her sixth child, lying in the bedroom of his Moscow house with her arteries severed. Here she can be seen with him, he seems to be holding her; but her gaze passes him by, absorbed in an ominous distance. Immerse yourself in such a picture long enough and you will recognize how alive the contradictions are, here too: the most precise technology can give its products a magical value, such as a painted picture can never again have for us. No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it. For it is another nature that speaks to the camera than to the eye: other in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the

unconscious. Whereas it is commonplace that, for example, we have some idea what is involved in the act of walking, if only in general terms, we have no idea at all what happens during the fraction of a second when a person *steps out*. Photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. Details of structure, cellular tissue, with which technology and medicine are normally concerned – all this is in its origins more native to the camera than the atmospheric landscape or the soulful portrait. Yet at the same time photography reveals in this material the physiognomic aspects of visual worlds which dwell in the smallest things, meaningful yet covert enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams, but which, enlarged and capable of formulation, make the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable. Thus Blossfeldt with his astonishing plant photographs<sup>1</sup> reveals the forms of ancient columns in horse willow, a bishop's crosier in the ostrich fern, totem poles in tenfold enlargements of chestnut and maple shoots, and gothic tracery in the fuller's thistle. Hill's subjects, too, were probably not far from the truth when they described 'the phenomenon of photography' as still being 'a great and mysterious experience'; even if for them this was no more than the consciousness of 'standing before a device which in the briefest time could produce a picture of the visible environment that seemed as real and alive as nature itself'. It has been said of Hill's camera that it kept a discreet distance. But his subjects, for their part, are no less reserved; they maintain a certain shyness before the camera, and the watchword of a later photographer from the heyday of the art, 'Don't look at the camera', could be derived from their attitude. But that did not mean the 'they're looking at you' of animals, people and babies, that so distastefully implicates the buyer and to which there is no better counter than the way old Dauthendey talks about daguerrotypes: 'We didn't trust ourselves at first', so he reported, 'to look long at the first pictures he developed. We were abashed by the distinctness of these human images, and believed that the little tiny faces in the picture could see us, so powerfully was everyone affected by the unaccustomed clarity and the unaccustomed truth to nature of the first daguerrotypes'.

The first people to be reproduced entered the visual space of photography with their innocence intact, uncompromised by captions. Newspapers were still a luxury item, which people seldom bought, preferring to consult them in the coffee house; photography had not yet become a journalistic tool, and ordinary people had yet to see their names in print. The human countenance had a silence about it in which the gaze rested. In short, the portraiture of this period owes its effect to the absence of contact between actuality and photography. Many of

Hill's portraits were made in the Edinburgh Greyfriars cemetery – nothing is more characteristic of this early period than the way his subjects were at home there. And indeed the cemetery itself, in one of Hill's pictures, looks like an interior, a separate closed-off space where the gravestones propped against gable walls rise up from the grass, hollowed out like chimney-pieces, with inscriptions inside instead of flames. But this setting could never have been so effective if it had not been chosen on technical grounds. The low light-sensitivity of the early plates made prolonged exposure outdoors a necessity. This in turn made it desirable to take the subject to some out-of-the-way spot where there was no obstacle to quiet concentration. 'The expressive coherence due to the length of time the subject had to remain still', says Orlik of early photography, 'is the main reason why these photographs, apart from their simplicity, resemble well drawn or painted pictures and produce a more vivid and lasting impression on the beholder than more recent photographs.' The procedure itself caused the subject to focus his life in the moment rather than hurrying on past it; during the considerable period of the exposure, the subject as it were grew into the picture, in the sharpest contrast with appearances in a snapshot – which is appropriate to that changed environment where, as Kracauer has aptly noted, the split second of the exposure determines 'whether a sportsman becomes so famous that photographers start taking his picture for the illustrated papers'. Everything about these early pictures was built to last; not only the incomparable groups in which people came together – and whose disappearance was surely one of the most telling symptoms of what was happening in society in the second half of the century – but the very creases in people's clothes have an air of permanence. Just consider Schelling's coat; its immortality, too, rests assured; the shape it has borrowed from its wearer is not unworthy of the creases in his face. In short, everything suggests that Bernhard von Brentano was right in his view 'that a photographer of 1850 was on a par with his instrument' – for the first time, and for a long while the last. [...]

And yet, what is again and again decisive for photography is the photographer's attitude to his techniques. Camille Recht has found an apt metaphor: 'The violinist', he says, 'must first produce the note, must seek it out, find it in an instant; the pianist strikes the key and the note rings out. The painter and the photographer both have an instrument at their disposal. Drawing and colouring, for the painter, correspond to the violinist's production of sound; the photographer, like the pianist, has the advantage of a mechanical device that is subject to restrictive laws, while the violinist is under no such restraint. No Paderewski will ever reap the fame, ever cast the almost fabulous spell, that Paganini did.' There is, however – to continue the metaphor – a Busoni of

photography, and that is Atget. Both were virtuosi, but at the same time precursors. The combination of unparalleled absorption in their work and extreme precision is common to both. There was even a facial resemblance. Atget was an actor who, disgusted with the profession, wiped off the mask and then set about removing the make-up from reality too. He lived in Paris poor and unknown, selling his pictures for a trifle to photographic enthusiasts scarcely less eccentric than himself; he died recently, leaving behind an *oeuvre* of more than 4,000 pictures. Berenice Abbot from New York has gathered these together, and a selection has just appeared in an exceptionally beautiful volume published by Camille Recht.<sup>2</sup> The contemporary journals 'knew nothing of the man who for the most part hawked his pictures round the studios, sold them off for next to nothing, often for the price of one of those picture postcards which, around 1900, showed such pretty town views, bathed in midnight blue, complete with touched-up moon. He reached the pole of utmost mastery; but with the bitter mastery of a great craftsman who always lives in the shadows, he neglected to plant his flag there. Therefore many are able to flatter themselves that they have discovered the pole, when Atget was there before them.' Indeed, Atget's Paris photos are the forerunners of surrealist photography; an advance party of the only really broad column surrealism managed to set in motion. He was the first to disinfect the stifling atmosphere generated by conventional portrait photography in the age of decline. He cleanses this atmosphere, indeed he dispels it altogether: he initiates the emancipation of object from aura which is the most signal achievement of the latest school of photography. When avant-garde periodicals like *Bifur* or *Variétés* publish pictures captioned *Westminster*, *Lille*, *Antwerp* or *Breslau* but showing only details, here a piece of balustrade, there a tree-top whose bare branches criss-cross a gas lamp, or a gable wall, or a lamp-post with a life-buoy bearing the name of the town – this is nothing but a literary refinement of themes that Atget discovered. He looked for what was unremarked, forgotten, cast adrift, and thus such pictures too work against the exotic, romantically sonorous names of the cities; they pump the aura out of reality like water from a sinking ship. What is aura, actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be. While resting on a summer's noon, to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch that throws its shadow on the observer, until the moment or the hour become part of their appearance – that is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch. Now, to bring things closer to us, or rather to the masses, is just as passionate an inclination in our day as the overcoming of whatever is unique in every situation by means of its reproduction. Every day the need to possess the object in close-up in the form of a picture, or rather a copy, becomes more imperative. And the difference

between the copy, which illustrated papers and newsreels keep in readiness, and the picture is unmistakable. Uniqueness and duration are as intimately conjoined in the latter as are transience and reproducibility in the former. The stripping bare of the object, the destruction of the aura, is the mark of a perception whose sense of the sameness of things has grown to the point where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness – by means of its reproduction. Atget almost always passed by the 'great sights and the so-called landmarks'; what he did not pass by was a long row of boot lasts; or the Paris courtyards, where from night to morning the hand-carts stand in serried ranks; or the tables after people have finished eating and left, the dishes not yet cleared away – as they exist in their hundreds of thousands at the same hour; or the brothel at Rue ... no. 5, whose street number appears, gigantic, at four different places on the building's façade. Remarkably, however, almost all these pictures are empty. Empty the Porte d'Arceuil by the Fortifications, empty the triumphal steps, empty the courtyards, empty, as it should be, the Place du Tertre. They are not lonely, merely without mood; the city in these pictures looks cleared out, like a lodging that has not yet found a new tenant. It is in these achievements that surrealist photography sets the scene for a salutary estrangement between man and his surroundings. It gives free play to the politically educated eye, under whose gaze all intimacies are sacrificed to the illumination of detail.

It is obvious that this new way of seeing stands to gain least in an area where there was the greatest self-indulgence: commercial portrait photography. On the other hand, to do without people is for photography the most impossible of renunciations. And anyone who did not know it was taught by the best of the Russian films that milieu and landscape, too, reveal themselves most readily to those photographers who succeed in capturing their anonymous physiognomy, as it were presenting them at face value. Whether this is possible, however, depends very much on the subject. The generation that was not obsessed with going down to posterity in photographs, rather shyly drawing back into their private space in the face of such proceedings – the way Schopenhauer withdrew into the depths of his chair in the Frankfurt picture, taken about 1850 – for that very reason allowed that space, the space where they lived, to get onto the plate with them. That generation did not pass on its virtues. So the Russian feature film was the first opportunity in decades to put people before the camera who had no use for their photographs. And immediately the human face appeared on film with new and immeasurable significance. But it was no longer a portrait. What was it? It is the outstanding service of a German photographer to have answered this question. August Sander<sup>3</sup> has compiled a series of faces that is in no way inferior to the tremendous physiognomic gallery mounted by an Eisenstein or a Pudovkin, and he has done it from a scientific viewpoint. 'His

complete work comprises seven groups which correspond to the existing social order, and is to be published in some 45 folios containing 12 photographs each.' So far we have a sample volume containing 60 reproductions, which offer inexhaustible material for study. 'Sander starts off with the peasant, the earthbound man, takes the observer through every social stratum and every walk of life up to the highest representatives of civilization, and then back down all the way to the idiot.' The author did not approach this enormous undertaking as a scholar, or with the advice of ethnographers and sociologists, but, as the publisher says, 'from direct observation'. It was assuredly a very impartial, indeed bold sort of observation, but delicate too, very much in the spirit of Goethe's remark: 'There is a delicate empiricism which so intimately involves itself with the object that it becomes true theory.' So it was quite in order for an observer like Döblin to have hit on precisely the scientific aspects of this work, commenting: 'Just as there is comparative anatomy, which helps us to understand the nature and history of organs, so this photographer is doing comparative photography, adopting a scientific standpoint superior to the photographer of detail.' It would be a pity if economic considerations should prevent the continuing publication of this extraordinary body of work. Apart from this basic encouragement, there is a more specific incentive one might offer the publisher. Work like Sander's could overnight assume unlooked-for topicality. Sudden shifts of power such as are now overdue in our society can make the ability to read facial types a matter of vital importance. Whether one is of the left or right, one will have to get used to being looked at in terms of one's provenance. And one will have to look at others the same way. Sander's work is more than a picture book. It is a training manual.

'In our age there is no work of art that is looked at so closely as a photograph of oneself, one's closest relatives and friends, one's sweetheart', wrote Lichtwark back in 1907, thereby moving the inquiry out of the realm of aesthetic distinctions into that of social functions. Only from this vantage point can it be carried further. It is indeed significant that the debate has raged most fiercely around the aesthetics of *photography as art*, whereas the far less questionable social fact of *art as photography* was given scarcely a glance. And yet the impact of the photographic reproduction of art works is of very much greater importance for the function of art than the greater or lesser artistry of a photography that regards all experience as fair game for the camera. The amateur who returns home with great piles of artistic shots is in fact no more appealing a figure than the hunter who comes back with quantities of game of no use to anyone but the dealer. And the day does indeed seem to be at hand when there will be more illustrated magazines than game merchants. So much for the *snapshot*. But the emphasis changes completely if we turn from

photography-as-art to art-as-photography. Everyone will have noticed how much easier it is to get hold of a picture, more particularly a piece of sculpture, not to mention architecture, in a photograph than in reality. It is all too tempting to blame this squarely on the decline of artistic appreciation, on a failure of contemporary sensibility. But one is brought up short by the way the understanding of great works was transformed at about the same time as the techniques of reproduction were being developed. They can no longer be regarded as the work of individuals; they have become a collective creation, a corpus so vast it can be assimilated only through miniaturization. In the final analysis, mechanical reproduction is a technique of diminution that helps men to achieve a control over works of art without whose aid they could no longer be used. [...]

1 [footnote 2 in source] Karl Blossfeldt, *Urformen der Kunst. Photographische Pflanzen bilder*. Published with an Introduction by Karl Nierendorf. 120 plates. Berlin 1931.

2 [3] Eugène Atget, *Lichtbilder*, Paris and Leipzig 1931.

3 [4] August Sander, *Das Antlitz der Zeit*, Berlin 1930.

Walter Benjamin, 'Kleine Geschichte der Photographie', *Die Literarische Welt*, Nos. 38; 39; 40 (Berlin, 18 September; 25 September; 2 October 1931); trans. Phil Patton, 'A Short History of Photography', *Artforum*, vol. 15, no. 6 (New York, February 1977); reprinted in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven, Connecticut: Leete's Island Books, 1980); trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, 'A Small History of Photography', in Jephcott and Shorter, eds, Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, ed. Jephcott and Shorter (London: Verso, 1985) 240-57.

**UTRILLO  
PAINTED HIS FASCINATING VIEWS OF  
PARIS  
NOT FROM LIFE  
BUT  
FROM  
PICTURE  
POSTCARDS**



The notion of a trace constitutes a new connector between the temporal perspectives that speculation arising out of phenomenology, especially Heideggerian phenomenology, dissociates. A new connector, perhaps the final one. In fact, the notion of a trace becomes thinkable only if we can succeed in discovering in it what is required by everyone of those productions of the historian's practice that reply to the aporias of time for speculation.

That the trace, for historical practice, is such a requirement can be shown if we examine the thought process that begins with the notion of archives, moves on to that of a document (and, among documents, eyewitness testimony), and then reaches its final epistemological presupposition: the trace. Our reflection on historical consciousness will begin its own second-order investigation from this final requirement.

What do we mean by archives?

If we open the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to this term 'archives', in the former we read, 'archives are constituted by the set of documents that result from the activity of an institution or of a physical or moral person.'<sup>1</sup> The latter says that 'the term archives designates the organized body of records produced or received by a public, semi-public, institutional, business or private entity in the transaction of its affairs and preserved by it, its successors or authorized repository through extension of its original meaning as the repository for such materials.'<sup>2</sup>

These two definitions and their development in these two encyclopaedia articles allow us to isolate three characteristics: first, the reference to the notion of a document (or 'record'). Archives are a set, an organized body of documents. Next, comes the relationship to an institution. Archives are said, in the one case, to result from institutional activity; in the other, they are said to be produced by or received by the entity for which the documents in question are the archives. Finally, putting documents produced by an institution (or its juridical equivalent) into archives has the goal of conserving or preserving them. The *Encyclopaedia Universalis* adds in this regard that, unlike libraries, archives constituted of gathered-together documents, 'are only conserved documents', although it modifies this distinction by adding that some discrimination is unavoidable – what should be conserved, what thrown away? – even if this choice is made only in terms of the presumed usefulness of the documents, and hence of the activity they stem from. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says, in a similar sense, that

conservation makes archives an 'authorized deposit' through the stipulations that spell out the definition of the goals of the institution under consideration.

Therefore the institutional character of archives is affirmed three times. Archives constitute the documentary stock of an institution that produces them, gathers them, and conserves them. And the deposit thereby constituted is an authorized deposit through some stipulation added to the one that sets up the entity for which the archives are 'archives'.

A sociological interpretation might legitimately be grafted to this institutional character, denouncing, if the need should arise, the ideological character of the choice that presides over the apparently innocent operation of conserving these documents and that betrays the stated goal of this operation.

However, this is not the direction in which our investigation leads us. Instead we must turn towards the notion of a document (or record) contained in the initial definition of archives and to the notion of a trace implicitly contained in the notion of a deposit.

In the notion of a document the accent today is no longer placed on the function of teaching which is conveyed by the etymology of this word – it is derived from the Latin *docere*, and in French there is an easy transition from *enseignement* (teaching) to *renseignement* (information); rather the accent is placed on the support, the warrant a document provides for a history, a narrative, or an argument. This role of being a warrant constitutes material proof, what in English is called 'evidence', for the relationship drawn from a course of events. If history is a true narrative, documents constitute its ultimate means of proof. They nourish its claim to be based on facts.<sup>3</sup>

Criticism of this notion of a document may take place on several levels. At an elementary epistemological level, it has become banal to emphasize that any trace left by the past becomes a document for historians as soon as they know how to interrogate its remains, how to question them. In this respect, the most valuable traces are the ones that were not intended for our information. Historians' interrogations are guided by the theme chosen to guide their inquiries. This first approach to the notion of a document is a familiar one. As I said in Part II, in volume I [*of Time and Narrative*], the search for documents has continued to annex zones of information more and more distant from the type of documents lying in already constituted archives; that is, documents that were conserved because of their presumed usefulness. Anything that can inform a scholar, whose research is oriented by a reasonable choice of questions, can be a document. Such critical inquiry at this level leads to the notion of involuntary testimony, Marc Bloch's 'witnesses in spite of themselves'. Rather than calling into question the epistemological status of documents, it enlarges their field.<sup>4</sup>

A second level of criticism for the notion of a document is contemporaneous

with the quantitative history discussed in volume 1 [*Time and Narrative*]. The relationship between documents and monuments has served as the touchstone of this criticism. As Jacques Le Goff reminds us in an insightful article in the *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, archives were for a long time designated by the term 'monument'.<sup>5</sup> For example, the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, which date from 1826. The development of positivist history at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries marked the triumph of the document over the monument. What makes a monument suspect, even though it often is found *in situ*, is its obvious finality, its commemoration of events that its contemporaries – especially the most powerful among them – judged worthy of being integrated into the collective memory. Conversely, the document, even though it is collected and not simply inherited, seems to possess an objectivity opposed to the intention of the monument, which is meant to be edifying. The writings in archives were thus thought to be more like documents than like monuments. For criticism directed against ideology, which prolongs the criticism mentioned above concerning the setting up of archives, documents turn out to be no less instituted than monuments are, and no less edifying as regards power and those in power. A criticism is born that takes as its task to discover the monument hiding behind the document, a more radical form of criticism than the critique of authenticity that assured the victory of the document over the monument. This new form of criticism directs its attack against the conditions of historical production and its concealed or unconscious intentions. In this sense we must say with Le Goff that once its apparent meaning is demystified, 'the document is a monument'.

Must we, then, give up seeing in contemporary historiography, with its data banks, its use of computers and information theory, its constituting of series (using the model of serial history), an enlargement of our collective memory?<sup>6</sup> This would be to break with the notions of a trace and the testimony of the past. However difficult the notion of a collective memory may be, particularly when it does not openly carry its credentials with it, to reject it would be to announce the suicide of history. In fact, the substitution of new science of history for our collective memory rests upon an illusion about documents that is not fundamentally different from the positivist illusion it thinks it is combating. The data in a data bank are suddenly crowned with a halo of the same authority as the document cleansed by positivist criticism. The illusion is even more dangerous in this case. As soon as the idea of a debt to the dead, to people of flesh and blood to whom something really happened in the past, stops giving documentary research its highest end, history loses its meaning. In its epistemological naïveté, positivism at least preserved the significance of the document, namely, that it functions as a trace left by the past. The scientific use

of data stored in and manipulated by a computer certainly gives birth to a new kind of scholarly activity. But this activity constitutes only a long methodological detour destined to lead to an enlargement of our collective memory in its encounter with the monopoly exercised over speech by the powerful and the clerisy. For history has always been a critique of social narratives and, in this sense, a rectification of our common memory. Every documentary revolution lies along this same trajectory.

1 [footnote 28 in source] *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (Paris, 1968) 2: 231.

2 [29] *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1971) 2: 362B.

3 [30] Cf. Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958) 94–145.

4 [31] Regarding the constitution of archives, cf. T.R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); *idem*, *Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

5 [32] 'Documento/Monumento', *Enciclopedia Einaudi* (Turin: Einaudi), 5: 38–47.

6 [33] Such a break is suggested by the conclusion to Le Goff's article. 'The new document, extended beyond traditional texts – which are themselves transformed insofar as quantitative history is revealed to be possible and pertinent – to data must be treated as a document/monument. Whence the urgency to elaborate a new doctrine capable of transferring these document/monuments from the level of memory to that of historical science' (*ibid.*, p. 47). The underlying assumption here is the opposition, introduced by Michel Foucault in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), between the continuity of memory and the discontinuity of the new documentary history. ('The document is not the fortunate tool of a history that is primarily and fundamentally *memory*; history is one way on which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked' [*ibid.*, 6, cited by Le Goff, 45].) However, even though Le Goff does accept this opposition between memory, presumed to be continuous, and history, which has become discontinuous, he does not seem to exclude the possibility that the discontinuity of history, far from getting rid of memory, contributes to its enrichment by criticizing it. 'The documentary revolution tends to promote a new unit of information. Instead of the fact that leads to the event and to a linear history, to a progressive memory, the privileged position passes to the datum, which leads to a series and a discontinuous history. Collective memory reevaluates itself, organizing itself into a cultural patrimony. The new document is stored in data bases and dealt with by means of such structures. A new discipline has arisen, one that is still taking its first steps, and that must respond in contemporary terms to the requirement for calculations as well as to the constantly increasing criticism of its influence on our collective memory' (*ibid.*, 42).

Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, vol. III (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978); trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, *Time and Narrative*, vol. III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 116–19.

**Allan Sekula**  
**The Body and the Archive//1986**

[...] Since [nineteenth-century] physiognomy and phrenology were comparative, taxonomic disciplines, they sought to encompass an entire range of human diversity. In this respect, these disciplines were instrumental in constructing the very archive they claimed to interpret. Virtually every manual deployed an array of individual cases and types along a loose set of 'moral, intellectual and animal' continua.<sup>1</sup> Thus zones of genius, virtue and strength were charted only in relation to zones of idiocy, vice and weakness. The boundaries between these zones were vaguely demarcated; thus it was possible to speak, for example, of 'moral idiocy'. Generally, in this pre-evolutionary system of difference, the lower zones shaded off into varieties of animality and pathology.

In the almost exclusive emphasis on the head and face we can discover the idealist secret lurking at the heart of these putatively materialistic sciences. These were discourses of the head for the head. Whatever the tendency of physiognomic or phrenologic thought – whether fatalistic or therapeutic in relation to the inexorable logic of the body's signs, whether uncompromisingly materialist in tone or vaguely spiritualist in relation to certain zones of the organic, whether republican or elitist in pedagogical stance – these disciplines would serve to legitimate on organic grounds the dominion of intellectual over manual labour. Thus physiognomy and phrenology contributed to the ideological hegemony of a capitalism that increasingly relied upon a hierarchical division of labour, a capitalism that applauded its own progress as the outcome of individual cleverness and cunning.

In claiming to provide a means for distinguishing the stigmata of vice from the shining marks of virtue, physiognomy and phrenology offered an essential hermeneutic service to a world of fleeting and often anonymous market transactions. Here was a method for quickly assessing the character of strangers in the dangerous and congested spaces of the nineteenth-century city. Here was a gauge of the intentions and capabilities of the other. In the United States in the 1840s, newspaper advertisements for jobs frequently requested that applicants submit a phrenological analysis.<sup>2</sup> Thus phrenology delivered the moral and intellectual 'facts' that are today delivered in more 'refined' and abstract form by psychometricians and polygraph experts.

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that photography and phrenology should have met formally in 1846 in a book on 'criminal jurisprudence'. Here was an

opportunity to lend a new organic facticity to the already established medical and psychiatric genre of the case study.<sup>3</sup> A phrenologically inclined American penal reformer and matron of the women's prison at Sing Sing, Eliza Farnham, commissioned Mathew Brady to make a series of portraits of inmates at two New York prisons. Engravings based on these photographs were appended to Farnham's new edition, entitled *Rationale of Crime*, of a previously unillustrated English work by Marmaduke Sampson. Sampson regarded criminal behaviour as a form of 'moral insanity'. Both he and Farnham subscribed to a variant of phrenology that argued for the possibility of therapeutic modification or enhancement of organically predetermined characteristics. Presumably, good organs could be made to triumph over bad. Farnham's contribution is distinctive for its unabashed nonspecialist appeal. She sought to speak to 'the popular mind of Republican America', in presenting an argument for the abolition of the death penalty and the establishment of a therapeutic system of treatment.<sup>4</sup> Her contribution to the book consisted of a polemical introduction, extensive notes, and several appendices, including the illustrated case studies. Farnham was assisted in her selection of case-study subjects by the prominent New York publisher-entrepreneur of phrenology, Lorenzo Fowler, who clearly lent further authority to the sample.

Ten adult prisoners are pictured, evenly divided between men and women. Three are identified as Negro, one as Irish, one as German; one woman is identified as a 'Jewess of German birth', another as a 'half-breed Indian and negro'. The remaining three inmates are presumably Anglo-Saxon, but are not identified as such. A series of eight pictures of child inmates is not annotated in racial or ethnic terms, although one child is presumably black. Although Farnham professed a variant of phrenology that was not overtly racist – unlike other pre-Darwinian head analysts who sought conclusive proof of the 'separate creation' of the non-Caucasian races – this differential marking of race and ethnicity according to age is significant in other ways. After all, Farnham's work appeared in an American context – characterized by slavery and the beginnings of massive famine-induced immigration of Irish peasants – that was profoundly stratified along these lines. By marking children less in racial and ethnic terms, Farnham avoided stigmatizing them. Thus children in general were presented as more malleable figures than adults. Children were also presented as less weighted down by criminal biographies or by the habitual exercise of their worst faculties. Despite the fact that some of these boys were explicitly described as incorrigibles, children provided Farnham with a general figure of moral renewal. Because their potential for 'respectability' was greater than that of the adult offenders, they were presented as miniature versions of their potential adult-male-respectable-Anglo-Saxon-proletarian selves. Farnham,

Fowler and Brady can be seen as significant inventors of that privileged figure of social reform discourse: the figure of the child rescued by a paternalistic medicosocial science.<sup>5</sup>

Farnham's concerns touch on two of the central issues of nineteenth-century penal discourse: the practical drawing of distinctions between incorrigible and pliant criminals, and the disciplined conversion of the reformable into 'useful' proletarians (or at least into useful informers). Thus even though she credited several inmates with 'well developed' intellects, and despite the fact that her detractors accused her of Fourierism, her reformist vision had a definite ceiling. This limit was defined quite explicitly by the conclusion of her study. There she underscored the baseness shared by all her criminal subjects by illustrating three 'heads of persons possessing superior intellect' (two of which, both male, were treated as classical busts). Her readers were asked to note the 'striking contrast'.<sup>6</sup>

I emphasize this point because it is emblematic of the manner in which the criminal archive came into existence. That is, it was only on the basis of mutual comparison, on the basis of the tentative construction of a larger, 'universal' archive, that zones of deviance and respectability could be clearly demarcated. In this instance of the first sustained application of photography to the task of phrenological analysis, it seems clear that the comparative description of the criminal body came first. The book ends with a self-congratulatory mirror held up to the middle-class reader. It is striking that the pictorial labour behind Farnham's criminal sample was that of Brady, who devoted virtually his entire antebellum career to the construction of a massive honorific archive of photographs of 'illustrious', celebrated, and would-be celebrated American figures.<sup>7</sup>

Thus far I have described a number of early attempts, by turns comic, speculative and practical, to bring the camera to bear upon the body of the criminal. I have also argued, following the general line of investigation charted in the later works of Foucault, that the position assigned the criminal body was a relative one, that the invention of the modern criminal cannot be dissociated from the construction of a law-abiding body – a body that was either bourgeois or subject to the dominion of the bourgeoisie. The law-abiding body recognized its threatening other in the criminal body, recognized its own acquisitive and aggressive impulses unchecked, and sought to reassure itself in two contradictory ways. The first was the invention of an exceptional criminal who was indistinguishable from the bourgeois, save for a conspicuous lack of moral inhibition: herein lay the figure of the criminal genius.<sup>8</sup> The second was the invention of a criminal who was organically distinct from the bourgeois: a *biotype*. The science of criminology emerged from this latter operation.

A physiognomic code of visual interpretation of the body's signs – specifically the signs of the head – and a technique of mechanized visual

representation intersected in the 1840s. This unified system of representation and interpretation promised a vast taxonomic ordering of images of the body. This was an archival promise. Its realization would seem to be grounded primarily in the technical refinement of strictly optical means. This turns out not to be the case.

I am especially concerned that exaggerated claims not be made for the powers of optical realism, whether in a celebratory or critical vein. One danger lies in constructing an overly monolithic or unitary model of nineteenth-century realist discourse. Within the rather limited and usually ignored field of instrumental scientific and technical realism, we discover a house divided. Nowhere was this division more pronounced than in the pursuit of the criminal body. If we examine the manner in which photography was made useful by the late-nineteenth-century police, we find plentiful evidence of a crisis of faith in optical empiricism. In short, we need to describe the emergence of a truth-apparatus that cannot be adequately reduced to the optical model provided by the camera. The camera is integrated into a larger ensemble: a bureaucratic-clerical-statistical system of 'intelligence'. This system can be described as a sophisticated form of the archive. The central artefact of this system is not the camera but the filing cabinet.

The institution of the photographic archive received its most thorough early articulation in precise conjunction with an increasingly professionalized and technological mode of police work and an emerging social science of criminology. This occurred in the 1880s and 1890s. Why was the model of the archive of such import for these linked disciplines?

In structural terms, the archive is both an abstract paradigmatic entity and a concrete institution. In both senses, the archive is a vast substitution set, providing for a relation of general equivalence between images. This image of the archive as an encyclopaedic repository of exchangeable images was articulated most profoundly in the late 1850s by the American physician and essayist Oliver Wendell Holmes when he compared photographs to paper currency.<sup>9</sup> The capacity of the archive to reduce all possible sights to a single code of equivalence was grounded in the metrical accuracy of the camera. Here was a medium from which exact mathematical data could be extracted, or as the physicist François Arago put it in 1839, a medium 'in which objects preserve mathematically their forms'.<sup>10</sup> For nineteenth-century positivists, photography doubly fulfilled the Enlightenment dream of a universal language: the universal mimetic language of the camera yielded up a higher, more cerebral truth, a truth that could be uttered in the universal abstract language of mathematics. For this reason, photography could be accommodated to a Galilean vision of the world as a book 'written in the language of mathematics'. Photography promised more

than a wealth of detail; it promised to reduce nature to its geometrical essence. Presumably then, the archive could provide a standard physiognomic gauge of the criminal, could assign each criminal body a relative and quantitative position within a larger ensemble.

This archival promise was frustrated, however, both by the messy contingency of the photograph and by the sheer quantity of images. The photographic archives' components are not conventional lexical units, but rather are subject to the circumstantial character of all that is photographable. Thus it is absurd to imagine a dictionary of photographs, unless one is willing to disregard the specificity of individual images in favour of some model of typicality, such as that underlying the iconography of Vesalian anatomy or of most of the plates accompanying the *Encyclopaedia* of Diderot and d'Alembert. Clearly, one way of 'taming' photography is by means of this transformation of the circumstantial and idiosyncratic into the typical and emblematic. This is usually achieved by stylistic or interpretive fiat, or by a sampling of the archive's offerings for a 'representative' instance. Another way is to invent a machine, or rather a clerical apparatus, a filing system, which allows the operator/researcher/editor to retrieve the individual instance from the huge quantity of images contained within the archive. Here the photograph is not regarded as necessarily typical or emblematic of anything, but only as a particular image which has been isolated for purposes of inspection. These two semantic paths are so fundamental to the culture of photographic realism that their very existence is usually ignored.

The differences between these two models of photographic meaning are played out in two different approaches to the photographic representation of the criminal body: the 'realist' approach, and by realism here I mean that venerable (medieval) philosophical realism that insists upon the truth of general propositions, on the reality of species and types, and the equally venerable 'nominalist' approach, which denies the reality of generic categories as anything other than mental constructs. The first approach can be seen as overtly theoretical and 'scientific' in its aims, if more covertly theoretical. Thus the would-be scientists of crime sought a knowledge and mastery of an elusive 'criminal type'. And the 'technicians' of crime sought knowledge and mastery of individual criminals. Herein lies a terminological distinction, and a division of labour, between 'criminology' and 'criminalistics'. Criminology hunted 'the' criminal body. Criminalistics hunted 'this' or 'that' criminal body.

Contrary to the commonplace understanding of the 'mug shot' as the very exemplar of a powerful, artless and wholly denotative visual empiricism, these early instrumental uses of photographic realism were systematized on the basis of an acute recognition of the *inadequacies* and limitations of ordinary visual

empiricism. Thus two systems of description of the criminal body were deployed in the 1880s; both sought to ground photographic evidence in more abstract *statistical* methods. This merger of optics and statistics was fundamental to a broader integration of the discourses of visual representation and those of the social sciences in the nineteenth century. [...]

- 1 [footnote 18 in source] John Caspar Lavater, preface, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, vol. 1, trans. Henry Hunter (London: John Murray, 1792) 13.
- 2 [19] John Davies, *Phrenology: Fad and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955) 38.
- 3 [20] On the history of the illustrated psychiatric case study, see Sander Gilman, *Seeing the Insane* (New York: J. Wiley, 1982).
- 4 [21] Eliza Farnham, 'Introductory Preface' to Marmaduke Sampson, *Rationale of Crime and its Appropriate Treatment, Being a Treatise on Criminal Jurisprudence Considered in Relation to Cerebral Organization* (New York: Appleton, 1846) xiii.
- 5 [22] For a reading of the emergence of this system in France, see Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979). Donzelot seems to place inordinate blame on women for the emergence of a 'tutelary' mode of social regulation. For a Marxist-feminist critique of Donzelot, see Michelle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, *The Anti-Social Family* (London: New Left Books, 1982).
- 6 [23] Sampson, *op. cit.*, 175.
- 7 [24] See Madeline Stern, 'Mathew B. Brady and the *Rationale of Crime*', *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, vol. 31, no. 3 (July 1974) 128-35; and Alan Trachtenberg, 'Brady's Pbrtraits', *The Yale Review*, vol. 73, no. 2 (Winter 1984) 230-53.
- 8 [25] On this point see Michel Foucault, 'Prison Talk', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980) 46.
- 9 [26] Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'The Stereoscope and the Stereograph', *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 3, no. 20 (June 1859) 748. For a more extensive treatment of this issue, see my 1981 essay 'The Traffic in Photographs', in *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973-1983* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984) 96-101.
- 10 [27] François Arago, letter to Duchâtel, in Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L.J.M. Daguerre* (New York: Dover) 91.

Allan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive', *October*, no. 39 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, Winter 1986) 3-64 (earlier versions of this essay were presented at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2 October 1982, and at the College Art Association Annual Meeting, New York, 13 February 1986); reprinted in Richard Bolton, ed., *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989) 343-53.

[ ... ] At the beginning of chapter 6 of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–30), Freud pretends to worry. Is he not investing in useless expenditure? Is he not in the process of mobilizing a ponderous archiving machine (press, printing, ink, paper) to record something which in the end does not merit such expense? Is not what he is preparing to deliver to the printers so trivial as to be available everywhere? The Freudian lexicon here indeed stresses a certain 'printing' technology of archivization (*Eindruck, Druck, drücken*), but only so as to feign the faulty economic calculation. Freud also entrusts to us the 'impression' (*Empfindung*), the feeling inspired by this excessive and ultimately gratuitous investment in a perhaps useless archive:

In none of my previous writings have I had so strong a feeling [*Empfindung*] as now that what I am describing is common knowledge [*allgemein Bekanntes*] and that I am using up paper and ink [*Papier und Tinte*] and, in due course, the compositor's and printer's work and material [*Setzerarbeit und Druckerschwärze aufbieten*] in order to expound things which are, in fact, self-evident [*um eigentlich selbstverständliche Dinge zu erzählen*].

– *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, 117

In sum, this is a lot of ink and paper for nothing, an entire typographical volume, in short, a material substrate which is out of all proportion, in the last analysis, to 'recount' (*erzählen*) stories that everyone knows. But the movement of this rhetoric leads elsewhere. Because Freud draws another inference, in the retrospective logic of a future perfect: *he will have to have invented* an original proposition which will make the investment profitable. In other words, he will have to have found something new in psychoanalysis: a mutation or a break within his own theoretical institution. And he will have not only to have announced some news, but also to have archived it: to have put it, as it were, to the press:

For that reason I should be glad to seize the point if it were to appear that the recognition of a special, independent aggressive instinct [*eines besonderen, selbständigen Aggressionstriebes*] means an alteration of the psycho-analytic theory of the instincts.

– *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, 117

The rhetoric and the logic of this paragraph are vertiginously cunning. All the more wily because they feign disarmed naïveté. In what can also be read as a theatricalizing of archivization, Freud seems at first to perform a courteous *captatio benevolentiae*, a bit like the one I owe you here: in the end I have nothing new to say. Why detain you with these worn-out stories? Why this wasted time? Why archive this? Why these investments in paper, in ink, in characters? Why mobilize so much space and so much work, so much typographic composition? Does this merit printing? Aren't these stories to be had everywhere?

If it is not without perversity, this *captatio benevolentiae* turns out to be *itself* a useless expenditure, the fiction of a sort of 'rhetorical question'. Immediately afterwards, Freud suggests in effect that this archivization would not be so vain, and a *pure loss*, in the hypothesis that it would cause to appear what in fact he already knows he will cause to appear, and thus this is not a hypothesis for him, a hypothesis submitted for discussion, but rather an irresistible thesis, namely the possibility of a radical perversion, indeed, a diabolical death drive, an aggression or a destruction drive: a drive, thus, of loss. The rest of the chapter recalls everything which had already, since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), more than ten years earlier, introduced this destruction drive in the psychic economy, or rather the psychic aneconomy, in the accursed share of this pure-loss expenditure. Freud draws the conclusion here with respect to civilization, and indeed to its discontents, while at the same time giving himself over to a sort of autobiographical, theoretical, and institutional anamnesis. In the course of this recapitulation, he stresses above all the resistances that this death drive incites, *everywhere*, outside as much as inside, as it were, and in psychoanalytic circles as well as in himself:

I remember my own defensive attitude [*meiner eigenen Abwehr*] when the idea of an instinct of destruction first emerged in psycho-analytic literature, and how long it took before I became receptive to it.

– *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, 120

He had previously made two remarks, as if in passing, of which we must not fail to take note. First of all, since overcoming this resistance, he can no longer think otherwise (*ich nicht mehr anders denken kann*). For Sigmund Freud himself, the destruction drive is no longer a debatable hypothesis. Even if this speculation never takes the form of a fixed thesis, even if it is never posited, it is another name for *Ananke*, invincible necessity. It is as if Freud could no longer resist, henceforth, the irreducible and originary perversity of this drive which he names here sometimes death drive, sometimes aggression drive, sometimes

destruction drive, as if these three words were in this case synonyms. Second, this three-named drive is mute (*stumm*). It is at work, but since it always operates in silence, it never leaves any archives of its own. It destroys in advance its own archive, as if that were in truth the very motivation of its most proper movement. It works *to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing* but also *with a view to effacing* its own 'proper' traces – which consequently cannot properly be called 'proper'. It devours it even before producing it on the outside. This drive, from then on, seems not only to be anarchic, anarchotic (we must not forget that the death drive, originary though it may be, is not a principle, as are the pleasure and reality principles): the death drive is above all *anarchivic*, one could say, or *archiviolithic*. It will always have been archive-destroying, by silent vocation.

Allowing for exceptions. But what are exceptions in this case? Even when it takes the form of an interior desire, the anarchy drive eludes perception, to be sure, save exception: that is, Freud says, except if it disguises itself, except if it tints itself, makes itself up or paints itself (*gefärbt ist*) in some erotic colour. This impression of erogenous colour draws a mask right on the skin. In other words, the archiviolithic drive is never present in person, neither in itself nor in its effects. It leaves no monument, it bequeaths no document of its own. As inheritance, it leaves only its erotic simulacrum, its pseudonym in painting, its sexual idols, its masks of seduction: lovely impressions. These impressions are perhaps the very origin of what is so obscurely called the beauty of the beautiful. As memories of death.

But, the point must be stressed, this archiviolithic force leaves nothing of its own behind. As the death drive is also, according to the most striking words of Freud himself, an aggression and a destruction (*Destruction*) drive, it not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *mneme* or *anamnesis*, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication, of that which can never be reduced to *mneme* or to *anamnesis*, that is, the archive, consignment, the documentary or monumental apparatus as *hypomnema*, mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum. Because the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilized so as to take on a signification, will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory.

*There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside.*

Let us never forget this Greek distinction between *mneme* or *anamnesis* on the one hand, and *hypomnema* on the other. The archive is hypomnesic. And let us note in passing a decisive paradox to which we will not have time to return,

but which undoubtedly conditions the whole of these remarks: if there is no archive without consignment in an *external place* which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpression, then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive. And thus from destruction. Consequence: right on that which permits and conditions archivization, we will never find anything other than that which exposes to destruction, and in truth menaces with destruction, introducing, *a priori*, forgetfulness and the archiviolithic into the heart of the monument. Into the 'by heart' itself. The archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself.

The death drive tends thus to destroy the hypomnesic archive, except if it can be disguised, made up, painted, printed, represented as the idol of its truth in painting. Another economy is thus at work, the transaction between this death drive and the pleasure principle, between Thanatos and Eros, but also between the death drive and this apparent dual opposition of principles, of *arkhai*, for example the reality principle and the pleasure principle. The death drive is not a principle. It even threatens every principality, every archontic primacy, every archival desire. It is what we will call, later on, *le mal d'archive*, 'archive fever'. [...]

Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: une impression freudienne* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995); trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 8–12.

Archives  
embodys  
the  
mystique  
of  
freedom

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**Marcel Broodthaers**  
**Interview with Jürgen Harten**  
**and Katharina Schmidt//1972**

[...] *Jürgen Harten* How do you view the relationship between your *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles), founded in 1968, and a traditional museum?

*Marcel Broodthaers* I'll see this relationship more clearly when the enterprise has drawn to a close; at the moment it's still very much alive. I have my ideas, without doubt, on this subject but they are still not altogether clear because the experience is not over. Nevertheless, it's not difficult for me to situate this relationship. In the first place it concerns a close affinity – because the invention of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (at the outset a simple arrangement of crates, postcards and inscriptions: three times nothing) was tied up with the events of 1968, that is to say the political events which occurred at that moment in every country.

*Harten* What does this imply?

*Broodthaers* One must picture to oneself a great alteration of consciousness, above all among young people, and this transformation inevitably also extended into the realm of art. A new question sprang up: What is art? What role does the artist play in society? I had already taken one step further by posing the question: What limits are there to the role of that which represents artistic life; that is to say: what is the role of the museum? This points, in the first place, to making a survey of the situation. And these arrangements of which I have spoken were for me a place for discussion and exchange of ideas. But the whole undertaking has evolved rapidly and disengaged itself from the immediate, or rather, sociological, context and begun to take on a life of its own. In short, this is the classic phenomenon of art. You conceive something, which you believe is intimately connected with a determined event that has taken place in society, and then this thing all of a sudden starts to live its own life, to grow and to produce cells. At that moment a kind of biology is born out of art, over which the artist himself has practically no control. After this I think that the artist will only be able to control this process for a short time and, moreover, only in a very general way. Then, he loses his hold. The ideas begin to multiply themselves like living cells.

The 'fiction' aspect, the fictive, has detached itself in a very particular fashion

from the enterprise bearing the name *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*. The unreal side, the arrangement, which was nothing more at the beginning than a simple décor, progressively instituted itself in my eyes, and those of my immediate circle. This museum became reality for my Brussels acquaintances, my friends, people concerned with art – and then people who came from abroad to see, because they had heard talk of it. Thus despite its fugitive character there germinated around the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* an entirely new system of relationships. The arrangement ceased to have a framing function; it became the symbol of a fictional museum, that is to say, the postcards took on a symbolic value precisely through their relationship with this special situation. As regards the question that arises in connection with what concerns us, the eagles: there, it was a kind of chance that intervened! I've spoken of a fiction based on the symbolism of the crates, and of which the point of view was rendered by the postcards. Now I speak of fiction in connection with the eagles that I exhibit under the same label, *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*. What's going on? It seems that when all's said and done the eagle is itself, from the beginning, a fiction ... a fiction of which the sociological and political content is more and more difficult to understand, as one gradually remounts into the past. How can one fully explain the birth of the symbol and myth of the eagle without the archaeological knowledge we have of the subject? I believe that this exhibition can make understandable that the eagle, and the way in which it is represented, rests on fiction. Two fictions will be opposed here, certainly with provocative effect. It is essential for this exhibition that we acquire, thanks to this confrontation of fictions, a more vigorous consciousness of reality; the reality of an idea, naturally.

*Harten* It's a question, finally, of a relationship between our modified consciousness and objects which really exist. If one looks at these objects with this modified consciousness, one has the impression that they change nature, but considered as objects they lead an autonomous existence. For example, the Sumerian and medieval objects were exhibited next to each other with a museum as the context. This context nevertheless changed its sociological significance, and I believe that thanks to your method – the 'fiction method' – we are now becoming conscious of this process.

*Broodthaers* You speak of method. I would perhaps prefer to base myself in the situation that I've created. The impetus for transformation which emanates, perhaps equally, from this exhibition of eagles comes from this 'fiction situation' rather than from a fixed method.

*Harten* In concrete terms: you're still waiting to see how the exhibition presents itself.

*Broodthaers* Incidentally, I'm not at all sure of the result. Still, I've asserted that one arrives there at a confrontation of fictions. For the moment, this is no more than a mode of representing things.

*Katharina Schmidt* In any case, do you see this exhibition [Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 1972] as a locus of discussion, just as it was previously, when you founded the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* [in Brussels in 1968]?

*Broodthaers* Yes, but a discussion with a totally different character. In the sense that this time the debate cannot develop in complete freedom. The visitor is summoned with a question but does not take part directly in the discussion. Accordingly, this doesn't correspond to what we hear through discussion. When there is discussion, everyone participates, intervenes, advances arguments. To be precise then: this exhibition is a proposition for discussion. As I think of these things, I'm disquieted at the idea that my invitation could be interpreted as taking a position.

'Entretien de Jürgen Harten et Katharina Schmidt avec Marcel Broodthaers', dossier de presse de l'exposition 'Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute)' (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, 16 May–9 July 1972); reprinted in *Marcel Broodthaers par lui-même*, ed. Anna Hakkens (Gent: Ludion/Paris: Flammarion, 1998) 80–83. Translated by Ian Farr with the collaboration of Maria Gilissen, 2006.

## Benjamin H.D. Buchloh

### Gerhard Richter's *Atlas: The Anomic Archive*//1993

What photographs by their sheer accumulation attempt to banish is the collection of death, which is part and parcel of every memory image. In the illustrated magazines the world has become a photographable present and the photographed present has been entirely eternalized. Seemingly ripped from the clutch of death, in reality it has succumbed to it.

– Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography' (1927)

In the exact duplication of the Real, preferably by means of another reproductive medium – advertisement, photography, etc. – and in the shift from medium to medium, the real vanishes and becomes an allegory of death. But even in its moment of destruction it exposes and affirms itself; it will become the quintessential real and it becomes the fetishism of the lost object.

– Jean Baudrillard, *L'écharge symbolique et la mort* (1976)

Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* is one of several structurally similar yet rather different projects by a number of European artists from the early to mid-1960s whose formal procedures of accumulating found or intentionally produced photographs in more or less regular grid formations have remained enigmatic (one could also think of the forty year-old collection of typologies of industrial architecture by Bernhard and Hilla Becher begun in 1958 or the work of Christian Boltanski begun in the late 1960s). They are either notable for their astonishing homogeneity and continuity (as is the case with the work of the Bechers) or for the equally remarkable heterogeneity and discontinuity that defines Richter's *Atlas*. Having made photography's innate structural order of the archive, its seemingly infinite multiplicity, serialization and aim for comprehensive totality the principles of the work's formal organization, these projects share first of all a condition of not being classifiable within the typology and terminology of avant-garde art history: neither the term *collage* nor the term *photomontage* would adequately describe the apparent formal and iconographic monotony of these panels, the vast archival accumulations of their materials. Yet at the same time, the descriptive terms and genres from the more specialized history of photography, all of them operative in one way or the other in Richter's *Atlas*, appear equally inadequate to classify these image accumulations.

Despite the first impression that the *Atlas* might provide, neither the private

album of the amateur, nor the cumulative projects of documentary photography could identify the discursive order of this photographic collection. And we could not argue either that the exactitude of topographical or architectural photography or the massive image apparatus of surveillance and spectacularization operative in photojournalism govern the peculiar *photographic condition* of Richter's *Atlas*. Lastly, in spite of their frequent appearance among the genres presented, not even advertisement and fashion photography and its principles of fetishization determine the reading of these panels. By contrast, what could come to mind first of all are the terms with which one would describe instructive charts, teaching devices, technical or scientific illustrations found in textbooks or catalogues, the archival organization of materials according to the principles of a still unidentifiable discipline. Avant-garde history, however, seems to have few if any precedents for artistic procedures that organize knowledge systematically within didactic models of display or as mnemonic devices. If such precedents do appear – as for example in the teaching panels produced by Kasimir Malevich between 1924 and 1927 which illustrate the theoretical efforts of the Institute of Artistic Culture in Leningrad – they are generally considered as mere supplements to the actual aesthetic objects.<sup>1</sup> This would also be the case with another crucial example that has similarly remained outside of the historian's terminological purview, Hannah Höch's *Media Scrap Book*, which the artist produced around 1933.<sup>2</sup> Höch's project points distinctly towards the earlier existence of a variety of artistic strategies which attempt to organize and accommodate large quantities of found photographs in an archival manner. Rather than deploying fragmentation and fissure as the dynamic principles of photomontage that Höch had practised in the late 1910s, her turn towards the foregrounding of photography's archival order seems to be probing the subject's continuing mnemonic competence in the face of rising media culture. The tracing of historical processes, the establishment of typologies, chronologies and temporal continuities – even if only fictitious, as in Boltanski's case – seem to have conflicted for the longest time with the avant-garde's self perception as providing instantaneous presence, shock and perceptual rupture.

### Excursus on the *Atlas*

The term *Atlas* rings perhaps more familiar in the German language than it does in English, being defined since the end of the sixteenth century as a book format that compiles and organizes geographical and astronomical knowledge. We are told that this format received its name from one of Mercator's map collections in 1585 which carried a frontispiece showing an image of Atlas, the titan of Greek mythology who holds up the universe at the threshold where day and

night meet each other. But later, in the nineteenth century, the term had been increasingly deployed to identify any tabular display of systematized knowledge and one could have encountered an atlas in almost all fields of the empirical sciences: an atlas of astronomy, of anatomy, geography and ethnography, and later even schoolbooks charted plants and animals and bore that name like the titan who held up the heavens. When the confidence in empiricism and the aspiration towards comprehensive completeness of positivist systems of knowledge withered in the twentieth century, the term 'Atlas' seems to have fallen into a more metaphorical usage.

### Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*

Thus we encounter the most important example of this tendency around 1927 in a monumental project which sets out to gather identifiable forms of collective memory: the *Mnemosyne Atlas* was first conceived by the art historian Aby Warburg in 1925 after his release from Ludwig Binswanger's psychiatric clinic in 1924; actively developed in 1928, it was continued until his death in 1929. Even though the scholar had to leave the project in an unfinished state, more than sixty panels with over one thousand photographs had been assembled by Warburg at the time of his death. According to his aspirations as recorded in the diaries, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* sought to construct a model of the mnemonic in which Western European humanist thought would once more, perhaps for the last time, recognize its origins and trace its latent continuities into the present, ranging spatially across the confines of European humanist culture and situating itself temporally within the parameters of European history from classical antiquity to the present.<sup>3</sup>

While according to Warburg collective social memory could be traced through the various layers of cultural transmission (his primary focus being the transformation of 'dynamograms' transferred from classical antiquity to Renaissance painting, the recurring motifs of gesture and bodily expression that he had identified in his notorious term as 'pathos formulas'), Warburg more specifically argued that his attempt to construct collective historical memory would focus on the inextricable link between the mnemonic and the traumatic. Thus he wrote in the unpublished introduction to his *Mnemosyne Atlas* that it is in the area of orgiastic mass seizure that one should look for the mint that stamps the expression of extreme emotional seizure on the memory with such intensity that the engrams of that experience of suffering live on, an inheritance preserved in the memory.<sup>4</sup>

While this introduction to the project reads retrospectively like an uncanny prognosis of the imminent future of social behaviour, Warburg evidently hoped to construct – even if for the last time – a model of historical memory and continuity of experience, before both were shattered by the catastrophic

destruction of humanist civilization at the hands of German Fascism. But the *Atlas*, at least according to its author's intentions, would also accomplish a materialist project of constructing social memory by collecting photographic reproductions of a broad variety of practices of representation. Warburg's *Atlas* thus not only reiterated first of all his lifelong challenge to the rigorous and hierarchical compartmentalization of the discipline of art history, by attempting to abolish its methods and categories of exclusively formal or stylistic description. Yet by eroding the disciplinary boundaries between the conventions and the studies of high art and mass culture, the *Atlas* also questioned whether mnemonic experience could even be constructed any longer under the universal reign of photographic reproduction, establishing the theoretical and the presentational framework to probe the competence of the mnemonic from which Höch's scrapbook would emerge a few years later.

Kurt Forster, the editor of the English edition of Warburg's writings, describes the arrangement as follows:

There, cheek by jowl, were late antique reliefs, secular manuscripts, monumental frescoes, postage stamps, broadsides, pictures cut out of magazines, and old master drawings. It becomes apparent, if only at second glance, that this unorthodox selection is the product of an extraordinary command of a vast field.<sup>5</sup>

It seems, at least at first reading, that we encounter in Warburg's project an almost Benjaminian trust in the universally emancipatory functions of technological reproduction and dissemination. Thus, the extreme temporal and spatial heterogeneity of the *Atlas*'s subjects is juxtaposed with the paradoxical homogeneity of their simultaneous presence in the space of the photographic, anticipating the subsequent abstraction from historical context and social function in the name of a universal aesthetic experience by André Malraux in his *Le Musée imaginaire*. This condition alone seems – at first sight, at least – to situate the *Mnemosyne Atlas* also in a peculiar parallelism to artistic practices of the historic avant-garde of the 1920s. Not surprisingly, this argument has in fact been made by numerous Warburg scholars, notably by Wolfgang Kemp, Werner Hofmann and most recently and most emphatically by Forster himself in his two essays on Warburg's methods. Forster states, for example, that in terms of technique 'Warburg's panels belong with the montage procedures of Schwitters and Lissitzky. Needless to say, this analogy implies no claim to artistic merit on the part of the Warburg panels; nor does it invalidate that of Schwitters' and Lissitzky's collages: it simply serves to redefine graphic montage as the construction of meanings rather than the arrangement of forms.'<sup>6</sup>

It is this remark (and many similar ones by the Warburg scholars

mentioned), in particular its intriguing and surprisingly clear cut opposition between a 'construction of meanings' (supposedly Warburg's) and an 'arrangement of forms' (supposedly that of Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky) which poses another question. First of all, whether any aspects of Warburg's *Atlas* can in fact be compared productively to the collage and photomontage techniques of the 1920s or whether we could understand more about either side of this problematic comparison by differentiating its two parts more rigorously and – most importantly for our project – by recognizing that the *Atlas* in fact established a cultural model of probing the possibilities of historical memory whose agenda was profoundly different from its activist precursors in the field of photomontage. Second, there is the question whether it could in fact be potentially productive to compare Warburg's *Atlas* with Richter's *Atlas*, as another example of such a mnemonic project. We would have to recognize first of all that while both projects obviously address the possibilities of mnemonic experience, they operate under dramatically different historical circumstances: the former at the onset of a traumatic destruction of historical memory, the moment of the most devastating cataclysm of human history brought about by German Fascism, the latter looking back at its aftermath from a position of repression and disavowal, attempting to reconstruct remembrance from within the social and geo-political space of the society that inflicted trauma.<sup>7</sup>

### Structures of an Atlas

Wolfgang Kemp was the first to point out that Warburg's project of an organization and presentation of vast quantities of historical information without any textual commentary should remind us of Surrealist montage procedures.<sup>8</sup> Thereby, Warburg's *Atlas* inevitably enters also into a comparison with another extraordinary and unfinished montage-project of the late 1920s, a textual assemblage which had attempted to construct an analytical memory of collective experience in nineteenth century Paris. Benjamin had equally associated his *Passagenwerk* with the montage techniques of the Surrealists and had explicitly identified it in those terms when he wrote that the 'method of this work is literary montage. I have nothing to say, only to show'.<sup>9</sup>

And Theodor W. Adorno's description of the *Passagenwerk* could just as well be applied to the essential features of Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*:

... [Benjamin] deliberately excluded all interpretation and wanted the actually existing conditions to be foregrounded through the shocks that the montage of the materials would inevitably generate in the reader ... To bring his anti-subjectivism to the point of culmination, Benjamin envisaged that the work should only consist of accumulated quotations.<sup>10</sup>

Again, several terms stand out in this discussion that deserve our attention, with regard to both the accuracy of the description of (and the potential differences between) Benjamin's and Warburg's model and to the accuracy of their definition of the epistemes of collage/photomontage and the question whether these are in fact the epistemes of the structural organization of the *Atlas*: first of all, the exclusion of interpretation in favour of actually existing conditions in the discursive construction of the textual memory. Second: the anticipation of shocks as an inescapable and intended result of the montage technique, presumably occurring most vividly in the interstices of discursive fields (such as the pictorial versus the photographic, the mass-cultural clutter versus the structural distillation of the avant-garde strategy, the artisanal versus the technically reproduced, the textual versus the painterly: to name but a few of the classical *topoi* and tropes of collage and montage aesthetics).

Thirdly, and crucially, it is Adorno's observation of anti-subjectivism as the driving force of the collage/photomontage aesthetic that presumably articulates a systematic critique of what would later come to be called 'the author function' of a text. And lastly, and directly connected with the preceding term, Adorno's emphasis on the accumulation of quotations as a newly emerging structuring device of montage aesthetics: first of all, in photomontage itself where it displaces the homogeneity of the conception and execution of painting. But soon thereafter, montage was also to transform literary or filmic aesthetics (those of the Soviet Union in particular) as for example in the factographic novel where it will displace authorial omniscience, narrative and fiction.

Thus one could argue that by the mid 1920s a variety of homologous new models of writing and imaging historical accounts emerged simultaneously, ranging from the montage techniques of artistic practices to Warburg's *Atlas* or those of the *Annales* historians. In all of these projects (literary, artistic, filmic, historical) a post-humanist and post-bourgeois subjectivity is constituted. The telling of history as a sequence of events and accounts of its individual agents is displaced by a focus on the simultaneity of separate but contingent social frameworks and an infinity of participating agents, while the process of history is reconceived as a structural system of perpetually changing interactions and permutations between economic and ecological givens, class formations and their ideologies, and the resulting types of social and cultural interactions specific to each particular moment.<sup>11</sup>

Even if Warburg's *Atlas* was in fact part of a newly emerging cultural paradigm of montage as a new process of writing a decentred history and constructing mnemonic forms accordingly, any comparison between Warburg and the montage techniques of the artistic avant-gardes, let alone the neo-avant-garde, will remain highly problematic if it does not recognize first of all

the actual discontinuities of the collage/photomontage model itself. These internal shifts and breaks in the paradigm emerge already in the late 1920s, and these changes were to become especially decisive in the paradigm's rediscovery in post-war practices. Furthermore, any attempt at a comparative reading of the structurally comparable projects will have to develop an equally differentiated understanding of the contradictions and changes which emerge already in the 1920s in the definitions of photographic functions themselves, as much in the theoretical approaches to photography in Weimar Germany and the Soviet Union as in the artistic practices deploying photography in both countries. More specifically, and particularly important for our discussion of Warburg's and Richter's mnemonic project, is the fact that at the very moment of its elaboration, opposite theorizations of photography had collided precisely on the question of the impact of the photographic image on the construction of historical memory.

This dialectic is evident in the positions articulated in 1927/1928: on the one hand we have to consider Siegfried Kracauer's epochal essay on photography arguing that photographic production devastates the memory image, a position which implies (most likely unbeknown to both) a severe critical challenge of Warburg's project to conceive of the *Atlas* as a model of the construction of social memory. At the opposite end of the spectrum one would have to consider the famous 'photography debate' of the Soviet Union as it emerges equally around 1927, primarily in the writings of the Soviet theorists and artists Ossip Brik, Boris Kushner and Aleksandr Rodchenko. And thirdly one would have to consider what remains probably the most important essay on photography of the first half of the twentieth century, written shortly after Warburg's project was interrupted, Walter Benjamin's *Short History of Photography* of 1931, which argues against the media pessimism of Kracauer's essay in favour of a new media culture of politically motivated montage.

To sketch out these oppositions only in the briefest terms we would have to point first of all to the latent dichotomy operative in collage/montage aesthetics from their inception: the poles of opposition could be called the order of perceptual shock and the principle of estrangement on the one side, and the order of the statistical collection or the order of the archive on the other. The structural emphasis on discontinuity and fragmentation in the initial phase of Dada-derived photomontage introduced the subject's perceptual field to the 'shock' experiences of daily existence in advanced industrial culture. While the metonymic procedures of photomontage and their continuous emphasis on the fissure and the fragment – at least in their initial appearance – operated to dismantle the myths of unity and totality that advertising and ideology consistently inscribe on their consumers, photomontage paradoxically

collaborated also in the social project of perceptual modernization and its affirmative agenda. But this revolutionary effect of the semiotic upheaval of poetic shock and estrangement was short-lived. Already in the second moment of Dada collage (at the time of Hannah Höch's *Meine Haussprache*, 1922) for example, the heterogeneity of random order and the arbitrary juxtapositions of found objects and images, and the sense of a fundamental cognitive and perceptual anomie, were challenged as either apolitical and anti-communicative, or as esoteric and aestheticist. The very avant-garde artists who initiated photomontage (e.g. Heartfield and Höch, Klutis, Lissitzky, Rodchenko) now diagnosed this anomic character of the Dada-collage/montage technique as bourgeois avant-gardism, mounting a critique that called, paradoxically, for a reintroduction of the dimensions of narrative, communicative action and instrumentalized logic within the structural organization of montage aesthetics.

What we are witnessing in fact, first in the mid-1920s and, becoming more decisive in the later 1920s, is precisely a gradual shift towards the order of the archival and mnemonic functions of the photographic collection as the underlying episteme of a radically different aesthetics of photomontage. In terms of its conception of the photographic, it is a shift that originates in the same confidence in photography's versatility and reliability that was also to drive Warburg's archival project and his confidence in the photograph's authenticity as empirical document, and the radical emancipatory power of the egalitarian effects of photographic reproduction. The photographic image in general was now defined as dynamic, contextual and contingent, and the serial structuring of visual information emphasized open form and a potential infinity, not only of photographic subjects eligible in a new social collective but equally an infinity of contingent, photographically recordable details and facets that would constitute each individual subject within perpetually altered activities, social relations and object relationships. Once again it would be worthwhile to investigate the parallels of the Soviet model of the photographic with the radical reconception of the historical process emerging simultaneously in the work of the French *Annales* historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. These parallels between the conception of the historical process and the construction and ordering of the photographic representation become most obvious, then, when we read Ossip Brik's argument suggesting:

... to differentiate individual objects so as to make a pictorial record of them is not only a technical but also an ideological phenomenon. In the pre-Revolutionary (feudal and bourgeois) period, both painting and literature set themselves the aim of differentiating individual people and events from their general context and concentrating attention on them ... To the contemporary consciousness, an

individual person can be understood and assessed only in connection with all the other people – with those who used to be regarded by the pre-revolutionary consciousness as background.<sup>12</sup>

This argument implies a radical redefinition of the photographic object itself. It is no longer conceived as a single-image print, carefully crafted by the artist-photographer in the studio, framed and presented as a pictorial substitute. Rather, as was the case already for Rodchenko's definition, it is precisely the cheaply and rapidly produced snapshot that will displace the traditional synthetic portrait. The organizational and distributional form will now become the archive, or as Rodchenko called it, the photo-file, a loosely organized, more or less coherent accumulation of snapshots relating and documenting one particular subject.

Instead of plotting the future models of participatory photographic experience under Socialism, Siegfried Kracauer analyzed the actually existing usages of the photographic image in the Capitalist media practices of Weimar Germany, specifically those governing the illustrated weeklies. Linking the capacity of the formation of memory images to an actual relationship with material and cognitive objects, Kracauer's extreme media pessimism recognizes that it is precisely the universal presence of the photographic image that will eventually destroy cognitive and mnemonic processes altogether. Thus he argues:

Never before has an age been so informed about itself, if being informed means having an image of objects that resembles them in a photographic sense. [...] In reality, however, the weekly photographic ration does not at all mean to refer to these objects or images. If it were offering itself as an aid to memory, then memory would have to make the selection. But the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. The assault of this mass of images is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the potentially existing awareness of crucial traits. Artworks suffer this fate through their reproductions. [...] In the illustrated magazines people see the very world that the illustrated magazines prevent them from perceiving. [...] Never before has a period known so little about itself.<sup>13</sup>

This was the moment when the rise of a photographic media culture allowed a first insight into the newly emerging collective conditions of anomie, the moment when it became possible to imagine that mass cultural representation would cause the destruction of mnemonic experience and of historical thought altogether. Therefore, one of the most enigmatic – and with hindsight ever more plausible – arguments made by Benjamin in 1931 suggested that the historical

climax of the medium of photography might have to be situated around 1860, since the photograph at that moment had barely accomplished the transition from the auratic object to the increasingly emptied structure of mere technological reproduction and at the same time, photography – as an emerging emancipatory, technology – could still contain the social promise of radically different forms of collective interaction and subjecthood.

### **The Beginnings of Richter's *Atlas***

If we now consider how the works of artists of the post-war period, and Richter's *Atlas* in particular, positioned themselves with regard to these photographic legacies of the historical avant-gardes, we can easily recognize that Richter's collection of found amateur photographs, of journalistic and advertisement photography, inverts the utopian aspirations of the avant-garde on every level: if some of the Soviet and Weimar practices and theorizations had defined photography in a teleological perspective as a cultural project of enactment and empowerment, of articulation and of self-determination, Richter contemplates the reigning social usages of photography and their potential artistic functions from the outset with an attitude of profound scepticism. If the agitational and emancipatory dimension of photomontage had originated in a desire for the radical transformation of hierarchical class relations and of the structures that determine authorship and production, Richter's *Atlas* seems to consider photography and its various practices as a system of ideological domination and more precisely as one of the instruments with which collective anomie, amnesia and repression are socially inscribed.

After his transition from East to West Germany in 1961, Richter started this collection of photographic images whose ultimate purpose – at least initially – seems to have been unclear even to him: organized according to the most traditional display system of a rectangular grid, the images – at first glance at least – appear to have been chosen solely for their sentimental value of recording instances and subjects from family history. Only one of the images from the first four panels would later serve as a matrix for one of Richter's photopaintings, begun at the time when the initial panels for the *Atlas* were assembled (*Christa und Wolf*, 1964). The others – including the third panel, consisting almost entirely of amateur landscape photographs taken on holiday trips – would remain seemingly mute, inconsequential documents. These photographic images appear at first as though they had been torn out of the family album shortly before Richter's flight from East Germany, to serve as souvenirs of a past that was being left behind forever, or as though they might have been mailed to him from his relatives in the East to console the young artist for his recent departure from his loved ones.

If we assume that the initial impulse to form the *Atlas* originated in fact in Richter's recent experience of the loss of a familial and social context, and in the encounter with Germany's self-inflicted destruction of the identity of the nation state, it would be plausible to consider the *Atlas* as one more, and in many ways very different, example in a longstanding tradition of cultural practices, just as Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* on the other side of that historical divide had responded to a similar experience of a particularly acute 'memory crisis'.<sup>14</sup> But as we indicated earlier, a different type of 'memory crisis' had been confronted by artists and by theoreticians of photography already in the late 1920s, prior to the historical destruction of humanist subjectivity, but not to the rise of a photographic mass culture and its devastating (or emancipatory) effects on the auratic work of art and the mnemonic image. Mnemonic desire, it appears then, is activated especially in those moments of extreme duress in which the traditional material bonds between subjects, between subjects and objects, and between objects and their representation appear to be on the verge of displacement, if not outright disappearance. Undoubtedly this would have been a condition foundational to post-war German culture in particular, entangled in the double bind of the collective disavowal of history, the repression of the recent past and an almost hysterically accelerated and expanded apparatus of photographic production to solicit artificial desire and consumption.

It is now one of the difficulties of positioning Richter's *Atlas* within that double perspective, and we have to relate, if not integrate, those two rather different formations within which the work could be conceived as responding to the condition of this dual 'memory crisis'. The first one is utterly historical and specific to the social and ideological framework of post-war Germany after Fascism. The second, in possible contrast with, but not entirely to the first, considers the impact of photographic media culture on the project of painting and on the conception of authentic object experience at large. Clearly, the questions raised by Kracauer concerned first of all the devastating impact of the photograph on the artisan-produced auratic work of art which contained what he would call the 'monogram of history'. In Kracauer's enigmatic definition, this 'monogram' constituted the singularity of artistic form, in that it succeeded in bringing the knowledge of death to the deepest resolution within the representation and thereby resisted repression at its most profound level.

Richter, as a subject of the post-war period, would now have to rephrase this very question, namely whether it could even be possible to conceive mnemonic images at the moment of the most violent, collectively enacted repression of history, a repression for which photographic media culture had now become, even more than in Kracauer's time, the primary agent. Simultaneously, Richter as a painter would have seen himself – like all other painters of his generation

confronted with the question of whether and how paintings could any longer be conceived at all in the confrontation with the apparatus of photographic mass culture.

The photographic images of family members making up the first four panels of the *Atlas* therefore seem to have served Richter – as they had served for Kracauer in 1927 and Benjamin in 1931 and again for Roland Barthes in 1979 (when the confrontation with the death of his mother made him write a contemporary phenomenology of photography) – as the point from which the reflection on the relationship between photography and historical memory would originate. As though photography's oscillating ambiguity, as a dubious agent simultaneously enacting and destroying mnemonic experience, could at least be fixed for one moment by situating the image in an analogue to the mnemonic imprint of the family relation itself.

After all, this is the imprint where physical contiguity and the referent of psychic inscription could not be questioned, where the causality and materiality of mnemonic experience seemed to be guaranteed. Whether this mnemonic imprint would be defined as that of genetic and hereditary encoding (the foundation of a proto-racist theory as suggested in the theory of memory developed by Aby Warburg's teacher, Richard Semon),<sup>15</sup> or whether it would trace the more or less successful psycho-sexual organization according to the Oedipal laws that determine the formation of subjectivity (e.g. Freud's inherent definition of psychic memory), or whether memory would be conceived of as determined by class and social institution (as proposed in Durkheim's theorization of memory structure): it is in the reflection upon the family image that the power of mnemonic ties to the past and their inextricable impact on the present could be most credibly verified as material processes, alternately – like photography – assuring and assaulting the formation of identity.

The fact that the mobilization of an *Atlas* of remembrance against a massive apparatus of repression did not just result from the private experience of a loss of a geo-political context and social-familial order but, as we have argued, to an equal degree from the encounter with the rapidly changing functions and structures of the photographic image that Richter discovered after his arrival in the West, is already apparent in the fifth panel of the *Atlas* where the homogeneity of the photographic material which had heretofore consisted exclusively of the more or less haphazard collection from the family album is eroded by a peculiar, at first unfathomable, heterogeneity of picture types.

Introducing a variety of clippings from the West German illustrated journals (such as *Der Stern*), Richter seems to have recorded his first encounters with mass cultural genres until then more or less unknown to him. Having escaped from a country where advertising of any kind was prohibited, where fashion

photography (let alone soft – or hard – pornography) were outlawed, and where images fuelling the desire for tourist travel and consumption would have been banned from the photographic public sphere of the Communist state, Richter could now, for the first time, endlessly peruse these images in abundance. It is not surprising then to see that precisely those categories (fashion, travel, soft-core pornography and advertisement) did in fact become the first to disperse the homogeneity of the amateur and family photographs of the first four panels of the *Atlas*.

In an almost exact analogy to the beginning of Kracauer's essay, Richter thereby juxtaposes the construction of public identity by media culture with the construction of private identity through the family photograph. Memory is thus conceived of in Richter's *Atlas* first of all as an archaeology of pictorial and photographic registers, each of which partakes in a different photographic formation, and each of which generates its proper psychic register of responses. While all of them operate separately (and in relative independence from each other) in the perceptual and the mnemonic apparatus of the subject, they all intersect, constituting precisely that complex field of disavowals and displacements, the field of repression and cover images within which memory is constituted in the register of the photographic order. What had made Kracauer's observation in the initial paragraphs of his essay so uncanny (in the parallel discussion of the image of the glamorous movie star and the grandmother) was the realization that – with the rise of media culture – the subject would no longer be primarily constituted within the models of continuity that ethnicity and family, nation state and culture, tradition, class and social customs had provided. Not even the bodily site of the mnemonic appeared any longer as a guaranteed referent, encroached upon as it was by the rapidly shifting fashion system. Instead, newly constructed signs and languages, residing and operating outside of all the mnemonic forms of experience that the family figures had represented, would now enter the mnemonic field, binding the desire for identity in different representational registers altogether.

Thus rather abruptly, in Kracauer's first image, the reader/spectator's libidinal investment is reoriented towards a female figure never known and that never will be known other than in the photographic representation. Her body is no longer the site of the auratic presence of lived experience and lived encounters (like that of Kracauer's grandmother, or Barthes' mother) but it is the body made of an industrially produced representation (the female star) and its technical reproduction. As Kracauer would be the first to point out, it is precisely in the investment of desire into the figure whose body is made up of invisible printed Ben Day dots that the libidinal splitting occurs, at the level of the image as much as at the level of the psychic formation, investing the photographic



medium with the condition of fetishism in an almost ontological fashion. Kracauer thereby anticipated a whole set of painterly concerns which would re-emerge in the work of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol in the early 1960s, shortly before Richter was to join them in the pursuit of understanding how the registers of fetishistic desire and of sign exchange value had gradually displaced presence, corporeality and the mnemonic experience and how these changes would inevitably alter the face of painting as well. Yet neither Kracauer's theoretical investigation nor Richter's artistic project are motivated by a nostalgic claim to reconstruct a fiction of an authentic identity centered in the body or the aura and the artisanal artefact. This dramatically separates their endeavours from Barthes' *Camera Lucida* which in fact attempts to resituate the bodily memory within the image of the mother and attempts to imbue it with an experience of phenomenological authenticity.

By contrast, it seems that Richter is engaged in a different project altogether: first of all, he attempts to explore the various registers of photography as the representational system within which historical repression is physically enacted and transmitted. The notorious attraction of post-war German artists to the banality of German consumer culture which governs Richter's extensive perusal of the material of the first four years of the *Atlas* collection (another example would be Polke's iconography) could find an additional explanation here: that it is not just a variation on the themes of Pop Art (which it certainly was as well, inasmuch as Pop Art had itself incessantly posed the question of the possibility of authentic experience under the reign of totalized commodity production). More specifically, what becomes evident in Richter's archive of the imagery of consumption is the underside of this peculiar West German variation on the theme of banality: the collective lack of affect, the psychic armour with which Germans of the post-war period protected themselves against historical insight.

Banality as a condition of everyday life appears here in its specifically German modality as the condition of the repression of historical memory, as a sort of psychic anaesthesia. Banality as a condition of aesthetic posture, its counterpart, is of course proclaimed by Richter as well, explicitly when he states notoriously that '... the most banal amateur photograph is more beautiful than the most beautiful painting by Cézanne ...'

Once again, two attitudes are joined here that make it doubly difficult to recognize the project of the *Atlas*: first of all, in its slightly juvenile assertion of a radical anti-aesthetic position, Richter associates himself publically with an avant-garde posture that had recently been revitalized in Pop Art's rediscovery of Duchamp. From a position quite typical for post-war German artists, primarily oriented toward the New York and Paris activities of the moment rather than toward the overshadowed legacies of the historical German avant-garde of the

1920s, Richter explicitly credits the work of Robert Rauschenberg with having provided his introduction to the collage/montage aesthetics, while claiming that he was either totally unaware of the photomontage practices of the Weimar Dadaists or that he was outright hostile to whatever model of political agitation in photomontage he might have seen in the work of John Heartfield during his life in the German Democratic Republic. This paradoxical historical and geo-political shift poses a number of additional questions in the reading of Richter's photographic archive.

First of all it poses the question of how the principle of random accumulation operates under substantially different historical circumstances, i.e. at a moment when randomness and arbitrary juxtaposition are not only functioning as established aesthetic procedures, but also as socially enforced legitimization of anomie disguised as an advanced state of individual independence. Collage aesthetic in Rauschenberg's hands had re-inaugurated the elimination of authorial choice and artistic authority by intrinsically linking authorship to the actual conditions of experience within advanced consumer culture, where the formation of exchange-value residing in the sign solely determines the constitution of the identity of the consuming subject.

Clearly, in the post-war moment, techniques of decentering the subject and dismantling authorial claims had changed once again in the transmission from Duchamp to John Cage, one of the formative figures for Rauschenberg's collage culture.<sup>16</sup> It is not easy to determine whether, in what was now the period of the neo-avant-garde, the radically subversive decentering of the (bourgeois) subject had just become a principle of affirmative indifference towards subjectivity altogether (e.g. Cage's Zen approach); or whether, in the post-war recurrence of these strategies, the politically enforced elimination of subjectivity necessitated this aesthetic recourse to structural, perceptual and cognitive anomie, since this model alone seemed to enact the decreasing validity of concepts of communicative action, self-determination, and transparent social organization.

Lastly, and most importantly perhaps from the perspective of this essay, such an attitude provokes the question of how and whether this insistence on anomic banality (even if given only as a posture) and the aesthetic project of dismantling the armor of psychic repression could ever be reconciled. This question will be partially answered by Richter himself, since already in the twelfth panel of the *Atlas*, presumably dating from around 1964–1965, a first set of images suddenly emerges from within the overall banality of the found photographs, rupturing the entire field. This puncturing positions the *Atlas* project suddenly within the dialectics of amnesia and memory that we have attempted to explore in this essay. Functioning in the manner of a *punctum* within the previously continuous field of banal images and their peculiar variation on the condition of the

*studium*,<sup>17</sup> the first set of photographs of victims from a concentration camp functions now as a sudden revelation: that there is still one link that binds an image to its referent within the apparently empty barrage of photographic imagery and the universal production of sign exchange value: the trauma from which the compulsion to repress originated. Paradoxically, it is at this very moment that the *Atlas* also yields its own secret as an image collection: a perpetual pendulum between the death of reality in the photograph and the reality of death in the mnemonic image.

This essay was published in an earlier and significantly different version in the exhibition catalogue *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art*, ed. Ingrid Schaffner and Andreas Winzen (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1998).

- 1 For a complete documentation of the teaching panels of Malevich and his collaborators see Troels Anderson, *Malevich: Catalogue Raisonné of the Berlin Exhibition 1927* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1970).
- 2 Maud Lavin has given us the most comprehensive description and discussion of Höch's scrapbook in her monographic study *Cut from the Kitchen Knife* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993) 711–21. Yet Lavin does not even attempt to address the contradictions that become apparent in her own discussion when she continuously refers to the scrapbook as a photomontage project only to assert at the same time that it differs in many unfathomable ways from photomontage proper. This unresolved ambiguity becomes most apparent in Lavin's final statement about the scrapbook: 'But the strongest impression one gets from looking through Höch's scrapbook is that it is a collection compiled for her own intense visual, sensual and spiritual pleasure. This private view differs from the representations in Höch's public and more critical photomontages, and as such the scrapbook can be considered as a mediation between the presentations of Weimar mass media and the exhibition displays of one avant-gardist' (120).
- 3 Soon thereafter, in a crucial text from 1931, Walter Benjamin's 'Short History of Photography', the scope of the term *atlas* is once again strangely modified for the proposals of contemporary needs (in an almost ominous prognosis of the needs of the future), when Benjamin discusses August Sander's *Antlitz der Zeit* (1929), the key work of the German Neue Sachlichkeit photographer, as an 'Übungsatlas'. Eerily anticipating that only a few years later physiognomic observation would not only serve as the pretext to political discrimination but more brutally as the pseudoscientific legitimation of racist persecution, this exercise manual, as Benjamin optimistically claims, will educate its viewers in the physiognomic study of the relationships between the class identity of the depicted sitters and their political and ideological affiliation in the imminent future. Benjamin states: 'Work like Sander's could overnight assume unlooked-for topicality. Sudden shifts of power such as are now overdue in our society can make the ability to read facial types a matter of vital importance. Whether one is of the left or the right, one will

have to get used to being looked at in terms of one's provenance. And one will have to look at others in the same way. Sander's work is more than a picture book. It is a training manual [Übungsatlas: literally an atlas of exercise]' (Benjamin, *One-way Street*, trans. Edmund Jephcott [London: New Left Books, 1979] 252).

- 4 Aby Warburg, 'Introduction to *Mnemosyne Atlas*', Warburg Archive, No. 102.1.1.6; quoted in Mathew Rampling, 'Mimesis and Modernity: Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin', unpublished manuscript.
- 5 Kurt Forster, 'Die Hamburg Amerika Linie oder Warburg's Kunstwissenschaft zwischen den Kontinenten', in *Aby Warburg: Akten des Internationalen Symposiums*, ed. Horst Bredekamp, Michael Diers and Charlotte Schoell-Glass (Weinheim: Acta Humaniora, 1991) 11–37.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 31
- 7 Joseph Koerner has suggested in a moving essay on Warburg that the rise of Nazi Fascism in Germany at the time would have in fact had a tremendous impact on the orientation (or disorientation) of Warburg's personal and professional life as early as the outbreak of his illness. See Joseph Koerner, 'Aby Warburg among the Hopis: Paleface and Redskin', *The New Republic*, (24 March 1997) 30–38.
- 8 Wolfgang Kemp, 'Benjamin und Aby Warburg', *Kritische Berichte* 3, no. 1 (1975) 5ff.
- 9 Walter Benjamin, 'Das Passagenwerk', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89) 574.
- 10 Theodor W. Adorno, 'A Portrait of Walter Benjamin', in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981) 239.
- 11 Not surprisingly, then, the parallels between the Annales historian Marc Bloch and Aby Warburg have been discussed. See Ulrich Raulff, 'Parallel gelesen: Die Schriften von Aby Warburg und Marc Bloch Zwischer 1914 und 1924', in *Aby Warburg: Akten des Internationalen Symposiums*, 167–78.
- 12 See Ossip Brik, 'From Painting to Photography', in *Photography in the Modern Era*, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York, 1989) 231ff.
- 13 Siegfried Kracauer, 'Photography', in *Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. Thomas Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998) 58.
- 14 Richard Terdiman coined the concept of 'memory crisis' to analyze those historical circumstances that generate an actualization of mnemonic efforts within the cultural practices of modernity, the efforts both to theorize the conditions of memory and to enact new cultural models of the mnemonic. See Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 15 See Richard Semon, *Die Mneme als erhaltendes Prinzip im Wechsel des organischen Geschehens* (Leipzig, 1904).
- 16 The consistent decay of the dialectical potential of the procedures of fragmentation, aleatory order and arbitrary relations already evident in the work of Rauschenberg and Paolozzi leads ultimately to their deployment as mere strategies of domination in contemporary advertising. It seems, however, that as early as the late 1940s artists such as Nigel Henderson recognized the

problematic conditions of a mere reiteration of the photomontage aesthetic by formulating an archival counter-aesthetic, as is evident in his extraordinary photographic panel *Screen* (1949–52).

- 17 The terms 'studium' and 'punctum' are, of course, those coined by Roland Barthes in his *Camera Lucida* to distinguish two modes of reading a photograph: the first one allowing for an apprehension of the obvious information provided by the image, the second one defining a peculiar point of contact between spectator and photograph, highly subjective and unpredictable, in which the perception of the spectator is 'pricked' or wounded, since the photograph suddenly opens up access to what we have called throughout this essay the mnemonic experience. See *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter, *Atlas: Das Archiv der Anomie*', *Gerhard Richter*, Vol. 2 (Bonn: Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1993); reprinted, trans. the author, in *October*, No. 88 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, Spring 1999) 117–45.

## Margarita Tupitsyn Against the Camera, For the Photographic Archive//1994

While the presentation and discussion of photography has made some progress since the beginning of *perestroika* in 1987, it continues to be the most neglected area in Russia's visual culture.<sup>1</sup> Unlike other aspects of contemporary art, which for a number of years have been subjected to interpretive practices, photography has lain outside the internal issues of the aesthetic debate in the Soviet Union. This circumstance contributed one more contrast between the paths taken by Western and Soviet cultures in the second part of the twentieth century. In the West photography constituted the prime example in the formation of postmodernist discourse and was firmly positioned in the annals of contemporary culture. In the Soviet Union unofficial photographic practices were virtually non-existent and photography as a medium received no place in the records of pre-*perestroika* cultural events.

To recreate some reasons for photography's failure in the eyes of the Soviet unofficial cultural community, one must briefly return to the period when documentary photography in the Soviet Union received most recognition and utilization. For this, let us consider some photographs that appeared in the major popular magazines of the late 1920s and early 1930s. At that time, owing to the need for the quick reproduction of images recording the first Five-Year Plan's advances (1928–32), photography gained superiority over painting in the cultural arena.<sup>2</sup> The journal *Sovetskoe Foto*, the mouthpiece of many photographers of the period, identified photography as a radical medium with an urgent political agenda and close contact with the productive forces of the proletariat. A page from *Sovetskoe Foto* displays a photograph of a steel-worker with the following statement: 'In the USSR photography is one of the weapons of the class struggle and of socialist construction ...' Printed in 1929, at the height of the first Five-Year Plan, the cover of another issue of the *Sovetskoe Foto* promoted a new model of the author and the new means of art production. It depicted a photographer with his camera turned directly towards the outside world, which he was about to document. The camera was viewed as a speedy recording tool that effectively replaced a traditional means of art making. Another cover of *Sovetskoe Foto* documents the new status of women by showing a female teacher in a classroom. She is lecturing to a group of students gathered from the vast illiterate population that the Soviet government inherited after the Revolution. All these photographic images aimed to reflect Soviet reality in the most instantaneous and truthful way and concentrated on the most advanced

social manifestations of the day.

With the successful completion of the first Five-Year Plan, photographic imagery began to acquire new meaning, shifting from promoting the proletariat to glorifying Stalin as the main force behind successful socialist construction. The worker's image was gradually overshadowed by that of Stalin. In Gustav Klutis' poster of 1931, *The Feasibility of Our Programme is Real People, It's You and Me*, Stalin joined anonymous coal miners, but unlike later images, in which the leader's portrait grew to enormous proportions, here the compositional format remained democratic since there was no distinction of scale between Stalin and the workers. In a similar vein, El Lissitzky's photomontage *The Current is Switched On*, published in the magazine *USSR in Construction* in 1932, combines a massive worker's hand switching on the current with a smiling Stalin presiding over the brightly illuminated city. Here Stalin is still sharing with the proletariat – symbolized by a hand – a position of equal importance along the path towards the socialist utopia. Soon, however, Stalin's image became gigantic, fully dominating both workers and collective farmers.

Similarly, by the mid-1930s *Sovetskoe Foto's* cover shots of workers and working photographers were replaced by those of the leaders and *apparatchiks*. Stalin was now present on virtually every magazine cover. He was captured while giving public speeches, conversing with his bureaucrats, or expressing paternal affection towards young women. Such post-Five-Year Plan imagery determined photograph's new function, namely to quickly spread the pictures that falsified and/or mythologized Soviet reality. In the context of such objectives and for its ability to capture everyday events candidly, the government viewed the camera as a dangerous tool. This turned the photographers' fascination with and trust in the camera into cautiousness and even fear.

The late 1950s experienced the first rupture in the continuity of totalitarian control over cultural affairs. Khrushchev's liberal policies gave birth to the first generation of unofficial artists who defied Socialist Realism as the culture of deception and worshiped modernist painting as the mode of pure creation.<sup>3</sup> These artists chose to disassociate themselves from Soviet history as it had evolved since the 1930s and lived in an isolated sociocultural environment with its own internal laws and transcendental beliefs. Dissident modernists did not consider photography, a prime suspect in the success of the deceptive political apparatus, a potent creative realm. For them the only justification for a camera was to chronicle events surrounding their unofficial artistic communities.<sup>4</sup>

The non-practice of photography left a vacuum in these circles, although there was an abundance of photographs taken by numerous official photographers, whose goal was to serve the requirements of Soviet mythography. For most artists this material, which was constantly recycled in

newspapers and magazines, presented an endlessly accumulating amorphous mass undeserving of attention from a creative person. However, by the early 1980s the dead body of the Soviet mass media was turning into a vast photographic archive, which conceptual artist Ilya Kabakov was ready to examine. In the context of Michel Foucault's perception of any cultural archive, for Kabakov the 'unavoidable' presence of this collection of photographs broke 'the thread of transcendental teleologies' that had governed alternative artists since they manifested their presence in the late 1950s.<sup>5</sup> Kabakov's rehabilitation of this material also led to the dissipation of the 'temporal identity' in which, to paraphrase Foucault, Soviet dissident modernists were pleased to look at themselves when they wished to exorcise the discontinuities of Soviet history.

Kabakov's *Four Essences: Production, State, Love and Art*, of 1983, first demonstrates his position towards photographic imagery. Here, in four panels covered with colour illustrations taken from popular magazines, the archive 'emerges in fragments ... with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates [us] from it.'<sup>6</sup> In response to the four topics of the title (which he suggested were the main themes in the Soviet representational apparatus), Kabakov tirelessly excavated images from the multiple geological layers of Soviet propaganda depositories. A year later, in his well-known album format, Kabakov executed a work called *Olga Georgievna: Something is Boiling*.<sup>7</sup> Instead of the drawings that he ordinarily combined with the chains of communal speech, here he decided to employ photographs of a communal apartment. But since the objective of the Soviet mass media's mythologizing mechanism was to keep its imagery to strictly positive information, Kabakov was unable to find pictures recording the poor conditions of Soviet communal existence. To compensate for this missing link of Soviet social history, Kabakov invited photographer and artist Georgii Kizevalter to chronicle a communal dwelling as it could be found in the early 1980s. The resulting photographs reflect the dismal environment of a typical Moscow *kommunalka*, concentrating not on the tenants' private rooms but on its corridors clogged with useless objects, and a communal kitchen whose tables and stoves were buried under piles of dirty dishes. Kabakov's exploration of photographic archives took a more autobiographical direction when he inherited a large collection of his uncle's photographs of the Ukrainian city Berdiansk. Although for Kabakov these images of Berdiansk possess a personal meaning, for an outsider they blend with thousands of other snapshots produced by Soviet provincial photographers. Combined with the archive of the artist's mother's letters addressed to various Soviet bureaucrats in a series called *He Lost His Mind, Undressed, Ran Away Naked*, these pictures serve as an illustration that in the Soviet Union the difference between public and private realms was virtually nonexistent.<sup>8</sup>

With its liberal policies towards arts and greater exhibition opportunities, *perestroika* contributed to the surfacing of new artists, who had hitherto only been able to work at home. But to an even larger extent it rejuvenated photographers whose craft's dependence on the notorious status of the camera kept the majority of them from working. At that time propagandistic decorations were quickly disappearing from the buildings and streets, thus exposing the deterioration of Soviet cities. The long-awaited opportunity to deal with reality as it is, instead of as it should be, had arrived. A vast number of themes hitherto forbidden to Soviet photographers opened up. One could document and reveal any of the ills of Soviet society, including crime, alcoholism, prostitution, political corruption, dark moments of official history, disastrous ecology, falsifications of Western life – in other words, virtually every subject that Soviet photography, in close collaboration with the official media, had concealed before *perestroika*. As long as the official media did not relentlessly attack its former boss, the Soviet political establishment, the wide variety of denunciatory material available could provide a number of photographers with productive sources for a long time. With all the enthusiasm it had exhibited in the process of glorifying the Soviet system, the media now subjected the same system to a degree of subversion impossible to match. While this fact by itself did not undermine the importance of some photographers, who along with the media 'reported' the real story about the Soviet Union, it significantly reduced the radical potential that such photography would otherwise entail. The public, on whose reception this critical practice closely depended, was also saturated by the media's deconstructive campaign.

This connection with the suppressed aspects of Soviet history and social life by means of their explicit and accelerated subversion made these topics disposable before they had received a thorough analysis. In reality, the participants of these projects only attempted to escape what Foucault called 'a *historical a priori*, an *a priori* not of truths that might never be said but the *a priori* of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said.'<sup>9</sup> In other words, for Foucault history is not 'a condition of validity for judgements' – an approach taken by many documentary photographers since *perestroika* – but 'a condition of reality for statements.'<sup>10</sup> Foucault continues:

It is not a question of rediscovering what might legitimize an assertion, but of freeing the conditions of emergence of statements [whether events or things], the law of their coexistence with others, the specific form of their mode of being, the principles according to which they survive become transformed, and disappear.<sup>11</sup>

It is this particular method of relating to history, as earlier manifested in

Kabakov's appropriation of mass-media photography, that has presented an alternative formula to the problems facing documentary practice and attracted a number of younger artists and photographers. [...]

The title of this article is a play on Aleksandr Rodchenko's *Against the Synthetic Portrait, For the Snapshot*.

- 1 Particular credit for significant exhibitions of photography organized since *perestroika* in Moscow must be given to the gallery Shkola (School).
- 2 For a further discussion of this period, see my essay 'Fragmentation versus Totality: Politics of (De)framing', in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915–1932* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1992) 482–96.
- 3 For a discussion of this period, see the chapter 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', in Margarita Tupitsyn, *Margins of Soviet Art: Socialist Realism to the Present* (Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1989) 23–37; and Victor Tupitsyn, 'East-West Exchange: Ecstasy of (Mis)Communication', in David A. Ross, ed., *Between Spring and Summer: Soviet Conceptual Art in the Era of Late Communism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990) 83–106.
- 4 Even in such cases the use of a camera was dangerous. A good example is the 'Bulldozer Exhibition' (Moscow, 1974) during which KGB agents smashed people's cameras and removed the film. Any recorded factual information about this open-air show would have made it hard for the bureaucrats to claim later to the Western press that nothing out of the ordinary had happened on the vacant field.
- 5 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. Alan Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972) 131.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 130.
- 7 Throughout the 1980s Kabakov also made a series of folders consisting of sheets of random typed pages, bearing no particular meaning, and photographs varying from the documentary to the private. These 'files' imitated the bureaucratic archives of many Soviet institutions.
- 8 During *perestroika* Kabakov had to make several attempts before he was able to take his uncle's archive out of the Soviet Union. This incident proves that even in the late 1980s photography was still officially viewed as material with the potential for carrying state secrets.
- 9 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 127.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*

Margarita Tupitsyn, 'Against the Camera, For the Photographic Archive', *Art Journal*, vol. 53, no. 2 (New York: College Art Association, Summer 1994) 58–62.

Anne Moeglin-Delcroix  
The Model of the Sciences//1997

The collector-artist's relationship with science doesn't only consist in a poetic approach to scientific material, or play with the methodologies of knowledge; it can sometimes in fact take the form of adherence rather than critique. In the wake of the prevailing presence of the human and social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s, imitation of scientific procedures brought a number of artists' books close to small erudite treatises. Artists were not alone in exploring this fascination but they often made more interesting use of it than others. Generally it was the youngest who turned to the rising social sciences, introducing a model of objectivity into the domain of art, traditionally associated with subjectivity, at a time when its connotations of the unexpected and incomprehensible had fallen into suspicion.

Thus they led in a direction inverting that followed by artists such as Paul-Armand Gette and Herman de Vries, who had progressed from science to art. Now the reverse route was taken, from art to science, or rather (and it can be a constitutive weakness) to the imitation of the sciences. A book such as *Due esercizi di antropologia (Two Exercises in Anthropology, 1974)* by Claudio Costa is barely distinguishable from fieldwork photographic documentation of its subjects – Maori tattoos, Moroccan nomads' huts and the tanning of sheepskins in Fez. Unless one already knows that Costa, a friend of the artists Robert Filliou, Ben Vautier and Wolf Vostell,<sup>1</sup> participated in the year of this book's publication in an exhibition curated by Günter Metken and Uwe Schneede, 'Spurensicherung. Archäologie und Erinnerung' ('Preserving the traces: Archaeology and Memory'),<sup>2</sup> in which he displayed arrows and other palaeontological remains in museum vitrines, and that, a year later in 1975 at Monteghirfo in Italy, he transformed a derelict farm with its implements into a 'museum of active anthropology', one would not be able to detect from its contents that this is an artist's book.

For some the model of the human and social sciences had the effect of a fruitful creative constraint. This was especially so when it provided them with a means, certainly paradoxical, to escape from the impasse of the artistic 'death of the author' to which these sciences themselves had contributed, and the search for an equilibrium, necessarily fragile, between science and art produced some incontestable results. Its manifestations are diverse but a few examples suffice to confirm that what is at stake is to borrow from the various social sciences the forms of their scientificity, with varying degrees of conformity or respectful

parody, one of these forms being the book, in its role as the necessary conclusion of all research tied to the publication of its results.

Didier Bay refers to sociological investigation in *Un si beau jour (Such a Beautiful Day, 1979)*, an enquiry into the stereotypes of wedding photography, as a condensation of those of the institution of marriage itself. The artist took his own photographs of a number of couples posing for a photographer on their wedding day. In this accumulation of similar documents, the impartiality of the good sociologist is departed from in the artist's predeterminations: the unity of place (the romantic Buttes-Chaumont park in Paris) intended to accentuate a sense of repetition and convention in the poses and décor; the replication on the book's pages of the photographs in situ in the family album – the means of the investigation thus merging with its object; and finally, the dedication of the book 'to alternatives and to free will', introducing a precise preliminary study, including all legal aspects, on marriage, cohabitation and divorce. Among other propositions it suggests the introduction of photographs commemorating divorce, and the analysis extends to all the alienations of social life: 'Thus an individual has multiple occasions "to marry", "to marry" a mode or style of living, with more or less degrees of transfer in the contract ... It is up to him to choose among the range of "images" which are proposed; up to him to be conscious or not of his conformity to the predetermined social behaviour which is thus proposed or imposed ...'<sup>3</sup> This sociological survey, marked by Pierre Bourdieu's studies of photography as a 'middle-brow art' (*un art moyen*), is thus also militant, appealing for more responsiveness and liberty in everyday life.

*Anonyme Skulpturen (Anonymous Sculptures, 1970)*, by Bernhard and Hilla Becher, takes as its starting point the model of architectural history. It is dedicated to the industrial architecture of which it establishes a typology (announced by the subtitle, *Eine Typologie technischer Bauten*), exclusively using photographs taken in the principal industrial areas of Europe and ordered by subject in chapters, barely introduced by a few lines of strictly technical description: from lime kilns to water towers, by way of blast furnaces and the head-frames of mine shafts. Only the title indicates that an artistic interest is at stake in this austere work: it presents the utilitarian constructions of the industrial age as so many 'anonymous sculptures'. Certainly around 1970 there was a widespread attitude that consisted in seeing art everywhere where it is not (and vice versa) and to claim that the most authentic art is not the work of artists. Even so, it does not seem that the lesson of this book is so superficial: the Bechers invite the recognition of 'anonymous sculptures' in these constructions because their technical function is in the process of disappearing and, with mine shafts, for example, closing one after the other, they survive in the form of the vestiges which are documented in these series of uniformly monochrome

photographs. There are no atomic power stations in this book but rather buildings which it will be a question one day of saving from destruction, witnesses not only of human ingenuity but of a lingering connection with beauty which has been lost in contemporary industry. This visual enquiry is made by artists whose formal inventory has the effect of summoning in us an increased visual attention.

To present these archives of the industrial landscape adequately a book was necessary. The same photographs have often been exposed on the walls of galleries and museums. Their arrangement there in serried, superposed rows produces an equalizing effect, as the immutable conditions of this frontal point of view reinforce the repetitive character of the series: all merges on the wall, and one loses the sense of small differences that the book sharpens by the very fact that it brings closer, as each page is turned, what can only be perceived singularly, through the alternate appearance and disappearance of each image.

As a last example, a book by Christian Boltanski, less well known than others, which is designed like an ethnographic study, *20 Règles et Techniques utilisées en 1972 par un enfant de 9 ans décrites par Christian Boltanski (20 Rules and Techniques used in 1972 by a nine-year-old child described by Christian Boltanski, 1975)* draws up a list of twenty children's games illustrated by small photographs of distinctive gestures from which are eliminated all irrelevant details, such as the face of the child. These photographs of an anonymous player show only the hands or the feet, in characteristic positions, as well as the game's accessories. They are captioned by a 'fig.', followed by a sequence number which shows that their succession is not arbitrary but decomposes the process being studied. However, these numbers do not refer to any 'description', in spite of the title of the book, and the text on the opposite page is limited to a laconic indication of the game's name. Furthermore, although these games are denoted here, with some anthropological veracity, as 'rules and techniques' and all placed on the same register, not all of them are familiar or widespread; besides the hopscotch, the puzzle, the paper aeroplanes and even the brushing of teeth, one finds a rather mysterious 'game of choice', which is not in any traditional repertory. The anomaly in the collection suggests that the singularities do not permit a reduction to the universal pursued by the enquirer; the individual, the little nine-year-old boy, even deprived of name and face, escapes the collective model which he is supposed to exemplify.

This small book places the circularity of the scientific method and its postulates in check. No doubt the artist, the observer in search of his own childhood, is the object as much as the subject of the investigation. Thus the imperfect replication of ethnography's erudite forms, in particular the absence of analysis of the documents gathered, surreptitiously reintroduces imagination

and subjectivity; not only the subjectivity of the artist, but also that of readers, who cannot fail to remember at this moment the familiar or secret games of their own childhood: 'Everyone will have a different image in his head. I always try to activate a memory in others; thus this is not only a desire for "preservation".'<sup>4</sup> The more so, as what catches the reader's attention in this booklet is the way in which it contradicts the scientific constraints and the ideal of objectivity that it seems to have imposed itself.

The project that inspires the above artists, despite being inscribed within the modernity of the human sciences, is in reality archaic: classification, in their view, constitutes the principal condition of knowledge. It is classification, too, which in these works establishes the link between knowledge and the archive. Bay's sociological enquiries, the Bechers' historical documentation and Boltanski's ethnographic investigations proceed no differently than the collecting of Gette and de Vries based on models from natural history. In each case, gathering and collecting refer to an empirical definition of science. They reveal a spirit of curiosity and a taste for the concrete rather than a liking for the abstract formalism of modern scientific rationality. In its intention, Maurizio Nannucci's book *Sessanta verdi naturali (Sixty Natural Greens, 1977)* follows the second approach, while in its result it goes back to the first. A brief preamble situates the book as part of a rigorous, systematic research project on the denomination and classification of industrially fabricated colours, with the aim of 'establishing a fundamental chromatic code'. Faced with the task's difficulty the artist decided to trace colours back to their original states in nature. Given that the natural colour *par excellence* is green, he proceeded to investigate the most complete range possible of its shades, following a specified experimental protocol described in the text: determination and classification of green plant specimens; standardization of the scales of each specimen on the photographs so as to record the different tones with maximum accuracy; and use of the Latin names of the plants to identify the greens obtained.

These conditions are important to the extent that they show how the book, while submitting to them, exceeds them. What is interesting in this publication is the way in which a basically conceptual project ends up colliding with reality, that is to say, the variety of greens and the number of plants. As it is unfolded, this leporello [a 24-page 'accordion' divided into grids of close-up photographs of foliage], initially much more high than wide, becomes a folding screen of greenery with indescribable variations of shades, a hymn to the diversity of nature: irreducible to all knowledge, it does not let you approach it other than by the eye, ultimately guided by the camera. It is impossible to restore to the unity of the word 'green' that which is multiple and cannot be designated except by the name of each particular species. This is why an exhaustive nomenclature

is impossible: 'The work is not defined with the series presented, but must be considered as work in progress.' Thus the book presents itself as a sampler of colours, where unity is solely assured by the square grid of photographic images and their methodical arrangement. One might conclude that, although dedicated to halting the establishment of a 'fundamental chromatic code' in reducing the diversity of colours to a few principal elements, this work actually reintroduces the ancient definition of science: as the outcome of description and taxonomy arising from wonder, the primal driving force of knowledge. [...]

- 1 [footnote 112 in source]. Cf. Claudio Costa, *Materiale e Metaforico, Sintomatologie sul work in regress* (Genova: Unimedia, 1979) 5; 7-8; 27-28.
- 2 [113] Günter Metken und Uwe Schneede, *Spurensicherung. Archäologie und Erinnerung* (Hamburg: Kunstverein/München: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 1974).
- 3 [114] Didier Bay, *Un si beau jour. Mes mariages. Meine Hochzeiten* (Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1979) 15.
- 4 [115] Christian Boltanski, 'Il parlait de lui ainsi ...' extracts from a tape recording dated November 1971, in *Christian Boltanski* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Museum, 1973) n.p.

Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, 'Le modèle des sciences, le modèle du musée', *Esthétique du livre d'artiste* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France/Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1997) 216-19. Translated by Ian Farr, with revisions to the original text by the author, 2006.

## subREAL (Călin Dan and Josif Kiraly) Politics of Cultural Heritage//1999

The history of the 1990s starts and ends under the sign of the archive. The archives compiled by the secret services of the Communist 'block' are one side of this reality. The corporate databases meant for monitoring potential customers are the other. Let's have a look here at the symmetrical cases of the East German Stasi and the Romanian Securitate archives, and at their respective faiths.

The German case is one of bureaucratic efficiency, where ethical targets are met by the simple reversal of the operating system in place until the WallFall: data gathering is replaced by data dissemination; limited access is replaced by public access; institutional oppression by individual interpretation; top-to-bottom regulation by horizontal self regulation.

The Romanian case is a messy one, with competing attitudes and solutions. Starting in December 1989 with the unfortunate sacking of the Communist Party's Central Committee; then with the deliberate fires set at various locations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and of the Securitate (the most troubling case is the complete burning of the Central University Library which, due to its location, was also hiding 'conspirative' facilities of the Securitate).

Continuing with the fierce debates (in both Parliament and media) about: closing the archives for x years; opening the archives only to authorized (?) persons; opening the archives for full access; destroying 'unnecessary' materials (the last became policy at least in one notorious case, when several truck loads of files were dumped in the junk area of Berevoiesti, not far from Bucuresti). Ending with the use of secret service files as weapons in political fights and as sensational material in trash publications.

All the previous facts and attitudes are rooted (besides corruption and selfishness) in a deep ignorance about the nature of archives, and about the role they play at this point in history. At the end of modernity archives are, next to and beyond their functional aspect, an embodiment of cultural heritage. They have to be protected, and made available for public visit and scrutiny – in the same way that old churches and monuments, museums, theatres, and libraries are. But unlike those institutions, archives do not carry ethical characteristics; they are in that sense amoral. Moral quality is the input of those who access them: people make sense of archives, not the other way around.

The emotional way in which the Romanian political class deals with the Securitate archives proves the difficulties the society as a whole has in dealing with issues which are prone to be interpreted in different, even opposite ways –



basically, an impossibility to accept dialogue.

And also a refusal of history as another dimension of the present: things of the past have to be buried with the past; as for the future, it is something that can be determined right now, by decrees. A paternalistic culture profiles itself from that bizarre contradiction between the superficial adoration of a past seen just as a series of amorphous clichés, and the concealed spite of a future in which no free space of opinion is left. Because that is the very source of the archive phobia manifest in Romanian society: fear. Fear of interpretation and judgment, fear of exploration and analyzes that might uncover hidden truths about the other but also about the self.

The inside-out operation of the Stasi proved that: a). the East Germans were heavily surveyed; b). large parts of the population compromised with the regime, up (or down) to collaboration; c). The Stasi was a well run and successful operation, by the criteria of functionality asserted to oppressive systems.

The Securitate carnival managed to plunge Romanian society into yet another painful set of dilemmas. Was Securitate: a). an efficient system of oppression as proven by the terror experienced in the last fifty years by major parts of the population; or b). an amateur operation, as proven by the quality of so many writings by and interviews with top officials of the apparatus, which are practically polluting the media of the 1990s? If a). then Romanians come out of communism as a people who suffered major wounds and need special consideration from the international community. If b). Romanians can look at themselves as a population of accomplices. Unfortunately there are no answers in sight to this dilemma, since there is no archive at hand in which to look for them.

The wanderings of the *Arta* magazine photo archive<sup>1</sup> are a case in point that illustrates some of the statements made above. Although it was not a secret archive, it was not a public one. And considering the state of legal mess in which we inherited it, it was also a self ignored archive, in danger of being destroyed due to institutional negligence. Although there is no eagerness to open access to this archive, or to submit it to a necessary operation of classification/research, a certain aura of concern floats randomly around it. The *Arta* archive is an amoral corpus like any other archive, but in this case amorality is expressed in a somehow graphic manner.

The right to access and to use of the material by subREAL comes periodically under scrutiny not because of some ethical concerns, but because of personal discomfort. Copyright and property issues are just a smoke screen meant to hide the good old reflexes of censorship: subREAL made work with an archive, instead of stashing it in a dark comer or trash it – as the standard procedures go. This is enough reason for discontent. But even more, subREAL is using the archive in a discourse which does not fit official views on national artistic values.

Freedom of expression cannot be questioned in the 1990s; it would be politically incorrect. Therefore the right to discourse is questioned by the bias of questioning the means of the discourse. As soon as the suspicion of appropriation comes in (subREAL 'has stolen' it), the *Arta* archive is about cultural heritage, about historical value, and it needs protection against abusive appropriation. As soon as subREAL makes an artistic statement starting from the archive, the archive itself becomes a negative entity, putting 'us' (Romania?/ Romanian art?/the people?/the Government?) in a wrong, 'untruthful' light.

Under the cover of virtue (one cannot use what one doesn't own) lies the scared quiz of the old offenders: how dare they say this about me?

What fascinates us in this archive, what made us visit it for years (beginning while it was still stored in the magazine's office), is a combination of chaos and comprehensiveness. Those piles of photographs, no matter how you look at them, are the exciting, unpredictable and still the most accurately true image one can get about the Romanian visual arts in the given period. With its personalities and failures, with its sordid secrets and its moments of triumph, with its daily efforts and compromises, with its lust for survival and its passion for decorum, with its intrigues and its frantic partying – with all. Part of the excitement we experienced entered, we hope, in the A.H.A. project.

Another fascinating aspect of the *Arta* archive is its unflattering character: in a domain (the art system) where hypocrisy is (still and everywhere) the rule, and in a society (the Romanian one) where pompous discourses defined all aspects of life for so long, it was extremely refreshing to see how the shallow peaks crumble, how power figures are massified, how fake masterpieces turn ridiculous, how oppressive paranoiacs become a pile of paper. And all that by just looking at pictures, by browsing, by putting black and white image next to black and white image, until the reality accepted its dominant colour – grey.

And then the boredom, of course. Archives embody the mystique of boredom, and the *Arta* archive is no exception to that. Boredom is a front cover preserving archives from intruders looking for easy excitement: you have to fight your way in a flattening environment, which puts the context above the individual value. That is also what makes *art* archives an endangered species: oddly enough, six decades after Walter Benjamin's luminary essay, people retain a strong distrust of technical reproductions, and a fanaticism about the uniqueness of the art piece.

In this context, Romanian culture is particularly ill prepared to 'swallow' the various appropriations that fed modern art history, other than qualifying them as eccentric. In a country that still has to fight with the traumas of industrialization and urbanization, the cult of uniqueness is overwhelming. In a country where the mass media were cut off from any natural development for fifty years, the way printed media and photography are building myths at the level of culture is still a

novelty. In that context, where we can even say that photography belongs to 'new media', appropriation art (archive art, citation art, plagiarism etc. – phenomena already settled in a system of references) is ignored and even potentially unacceptable. But trying to implement such realities in our culture by an artificial operation would be inefficient and arrogant; our mentioning of them here is contextual. We started our A.H.A. trip as a query about our own identity, about the way in which, through our profession as artists and art journalists, but also through more general shifting phenomena, we became what we were (still are) – the Serfs of Art.

Some will find our tone pessimistic, others ironic or disrespectful. A third party will question the artistry of our discourse. Other will bring in copyright issues, image property issues, and so on. We can agree with all of them, thanks to our comprehensive position: with legs widely spread between the totalitarian 1980s and the libertarian 1990s, between the illusory localisms of Romania and the fake globalisms of Europe, we are doomed (if not by merit at least by birth) to be part of all systems and to please them all. From our perspective, that is, what the A.H.A. says: living realities (individuals, networks) are swallowed into amorphous data. Data processing blurs the border between individual identity and political identity. Apoliticism is an illusion, just as dissidence without compromises is illusion (or madness). Privacy does not exist: whenever a line is drawn around a person, a statement, an art object, something alien falls within that border and something valuable falls out of it.

We are certain that our contribution to the archive phenomenon, namely to the analysis of A.H.A., is historically determined. At this moment we consider that the Romanians live in denial of their political participation in the previous regime just because they can't see themselves surviving out of that denial. We believe that people have a problem with institutional specificity: they love to be part of institutions, but do not know how to use them. We noticed that institutions do not have the practice of individual reference. That is why archives do not become databases and why public access is still a random reality.

Of course those negative aspects will disappear very soon and our A.H.A. point of view will become obsolete. But this is another positive aspect of archives: they always get renewed by fresh approaches. We will be happy to lay back and enjoy the many ways in which archive issues will be developed further, by other actors.

1 The *Art History Archive* centres on the archive materials of *Arta*, a Romanian art magazine where Călin Dan and Josif Kiraly were editorial staff before the publication's termination.

SubREAL (Călin Dan and Josif Kiraly), 'Politics of Cultural Heritage', first published in *subREAL – Art History Archive*, (Venice: Romanian Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 1999) n.p.

## Thomas Hirschhorn Interview with Okwui Enwezor//2000

*Okwui Enwezor* [...] The monument has been a part of the way in which you not only describe the public presence of the personalities you admire but also form a critique of the very constitution of the monument as a forever-present, temporal question in the public imagination. How do you reconcile this critique with the fact that you do not wish to produce monuments?

*Thomas Hirschhorn* My critique of the monument comes from the fact that the idea of the monument is determined, produced, and situated by decisions imposed from above, by those in power. And its forms correspond to the will to lead people to admire the monument and, along with it, the dominant ideology – whether it is the monument in Berlin to Ernst Thälmann, co-founder of the German Communist Party, or the commemoration in Washington, D.C. of those who lost their lives in Vietnam. A monument always retains something of the demagogic. I want to fight hierarchy, demagoguery, this source of power.

*Enwezor* The nature of the materials you use has been central to the discussion of your work in recent years, especially your proclivity for and insistence on materials that are readily available, cheap, mass-produced; materials that both mimic 'kitsch' and deride the excesses of our throw-away, consumer-driven culture. For me there is, in this choice of cheap, quotidian materials such as plastic, aluminium foil, and cardboard, a strategy to contaminate the very nature of art's relationship to high culture, and to form a critique of the preciousness of sculptural practice. What led you to these types of materials for your work?

*Hirschhorn* The choice of materials is important. I want to make simple and economical work with materials that everyone knows and uses. I don't choose them for the value of their appearance. I hate art made of noble materials. I don't understand why one attaches value to a material, whether it is clean metal, marble, glass, fine wood, big screens, empty space, and enormous, heavily framed objects, etc. I don't believe these are contemporary expressions. I am against using materials or forms that attempt to intimidate, seduce, or dominate rather than encourage reflection. For the activity or reflection, material does not matter. The materials I work with are precarious. This means that their temporal existence is clearly determined by human beings, not by nature.

*Enwezor* Don't you risk, in terms of the materials you use, the charge of being patronizing to so-called everyday people in terms of this idea of working very close to how 'people' identify, through their sense of recognition, what these materials are and what they mean? In a sense, don't we have here what one would call a kind of naïve utopianism and a nostalgia, a kind of social-realist attitude, about the humility of such materials versus the pretensions of high art – the highly unfinished, regulated, and precious sculptural object in a museum context and the banal, unprecious material of the everyday.

*Hirschhorn* My choice of materials, as well as my work itself, is constituted as critical, obviously. The energy that fuels my work comes from my being a critic of the state of the world, of the human condition. However, for me these choices are based on a determination that originates beyond classification or the order of making critical art. I don't want to play the critic against the public or vice versa; but, rather, art and the art world cannot be removed from the larger world. I try to present my ideas and reflections in a clearer, more powerful manner at each exhibition. Naïveté doesn't interest me; utopianism does; nostalgia doesn't interest me; stupidity does. I want my work to be judged. [...]

*Enwezor* Let's return to the personalities that have become part of your personal mythology. You have created in your work a kind of encyclopaedia, a cosmos, in which the works and ideas of a number of twentieth-century artists and writers have been made to resonate. Out of this, you have elaborated upon four sculptural models to investigate such issues as loss, love, piety, ideology, and so on. They are: altars, monuments, 'Direct Sculptures', and kiosks. You have made these over the past three or four years. What is it about these individuals that attracts you to them?

*Hirschhorn* What matters the most to me, in choosing these individuals, is that they have all tried to change the world. They have all led lives and produced work that inspires admiration, not in terms of success or failure, but through the pertinence of their inquiry. I can say that I love them and their work unconditionally. I love Robert Walser, Ingeborg Bachmann, Gilles Deleuze, Benedict de Spinoza, Otto Freundlich, Fernand Léger, Emmanuel Bove, Ljiljana Popova, Piet Mondrian, Georges Bataille, Raymond Carver, Emil Nolde, Gramsci, and Meret Oppenheim.

*Enwezor* So it is their personal investment or engagement, rather than their embodiment of a higher ideological position, that moves you?

*Hirschhorn* Yes, the commitment is personal. The fact that I say I love these artists and writers and put them in a public place is a personal, artistic commitment on my part. [...]

I made four altars, each for someone whose work is important to me and who is deceased: Mondrian, Bachman, Freundlich and Carver. All of these altars commemorate their lives and work, and are situated in locations where they could have died by accident, by chance: on a sidewalk, in the street, in a corner. I exhibited all four altars in different cities; two have been shown twice in different places. These very local sites of memory become universal sites of memory, by virtue of their location. The altars evoke the memory of someone who has died and who was loved. It is important to attest to one's love, one's attachment. My altars were inspired by the memorials that are created spontaneously for the deceased, both famous and anonymous.

*Enwezor* But the altars are dislocated, shown out of context and in places where we least expect them.

*Hirschhorn* What interests me in working in public spaces is the choice of placement, of location. The spontaneous altars to which I just referred are in unexpected locations. Most people don't die in the middle of a square or on a beautiful boulevard; their death, or the accident that precipitates their death, rarely happens in a strategic place. Even famous people do not die in the centre of something. There are no hierarchies involved. Location is important not in relationship to the plan of a city but in relationship to the deceased. This is how I locate my altars.

*Enwezor* I want to shift to the four sculptural categories that you have developed in terms of the ways in which you are seeking a kind of interaction within the context of public space, without ever emphasizing the public [aspect of the] space as one of the conditions of the work. What does 'Direct Sculpture' mean to you and how does it relate to your work overall?

*Hirschhorn* 'Direct Sculptures' are models of monuments. They are in contrast to altars, kiosks, and monuments, located in interiors, in exhibition spaces. 'Direct Sculpture' is the coming together of a will that issues from below and a will that issues from above. This congruence gives shape to a new type of sculpture, a three-dimensional form that lends itself to carrying, to supporting messages that have nothing to do with the original purpose of the actual support. The message takes possession of the sculpture. My first 'Direct Sculpture' was

inspired by what happened in Paris at the spot of the automobile accident that killed Princess Diana. At this location, a monument exists which represents the flame of liberty. Because of the princess' death, this monument, which had been standing unnoticed for years, took on new meaning. People started using it as a support for their messages of love to the princess. They have claimed the monument, transforming it into a just monument.

*Enwezor* But, in this sense, 'Direct Sculpture' also plays off the syntax of the readymade.

*Hirschhorn* 'Direct Sculpture' has no signature. It is signed by the community, with coloured spray paint, or whatever. In this sense, it is not a readymade.

*Enwezor* You have made what you call classical monuments for four philosophers: Spinoza, Deleuze, Gramsci, and Bataille. Why them, and why monuments for them, altars for artists and writers?

*Hirschhorn* These philosophers have something to say to us today. I think that the capacity of human beings for reflection, the ability we have to make our brains work, is beautiful. Spinoza, Deleuze, Gramsci, and Bataille are examples of people who instil confidence in our reflective capacities. They force us to think. Monuments to their memory continue to question, reflect, and keep this internal beauty vital. The altars for artists and writers are conceived as personal commitments; the monuments for philosophers are conceived as communal commitments.

*Enwezor* You have stated that artists have a responsibility in the ways their work communicates with the world. What do you see today as the ethical relationship between contemporary art and artists working today?

*Hirschhorn* Spaces that contemporary art occupies are spaces for reclaiming the world, which I believe contemporary art must do. As an artist, I want to work in relationship to and in the world that I inhabit. Contemporary art is a strong force, because it can repossess the world according to the biases of individual commitments. It poses the question of ethics. It can express sadness; it can express what we reject. [...]

Thomas Hirschhorn, Interview with Okwui Enwezor, in James Rondeau and Suzane Ghez, eds, *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2000).

## Charles Merewether A Language to Come: Japanese Photography After the Event//2002

Do not speak to people about death  
Do not speak words that disappear like smoke  
You cannot look at death  
When (you think you look at death)  
what you find there are ashes only.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath of the atomic bomb in Japan, Nakagiri Masao writes of a world transformed, where nothing remained except the sight of annihilation; nothing is to be seen except ashes. Everything that had once been had suddenly disappeared. Even in translation, the words of Masao, a member of the post-war literary group Arechi (The Wasteland) capture the sense of how tenuous a hold on life became, of how every certainty or gesture of response had been reduced to the ground degree zero of ashes. How then to speak and document what had passed because so little remains on which to hold? And how to attest to the veracity of an attestation and what precisely is it that it attests to? As Maurice Blanchot wrote: 'Enlaced, separated: witnesses without attestation, coming towards us, also coming towards each other, at the detour of time that they were called upon to make turn.'<sup>2</sup> The question becomes what is the relationship between testimony and a record of what has come to pass, between the document and the archive.

Writing on the archive, Paul Ricoeur has suggested that it is 'constituted by the set of documents that result from the activity of an institution or of a physical or moral person' designating not only an 'organized body of records' but also an 'authorized repository'.<sup>3</sup> More than that Ricoeur views the archive as synonymous with the trace and the document.<sup>4</sup> The document or record, he writes, is 'contained in the initial definition of archives and ... the notion of a trace implicitly contained in the notion of a deposit.'<sup>5</sup> The document serves as evidence of a course of events and thus if 'history is a true narrative, documents constitute its ultimate means of proof. They nourish its claim to be based on facts.'<sup>6</sup> The document functions therefore as a trace left by the past. Collected and organized, this body of material becomes the theoretical premise and material basis for the construction of the archive and the writing of history. From this perspective, therefore, traces are not simply residual remains, signs and clues, but the material evidence, the stuff of history, the archive. Pointing to the link of passing and pastness whereby what passes by leaves a trace of what has

past, Ricoeur remarks on the apparent paradox. The thing has passed or the passage is no longer, while the trace exists and remains.

And yet to admit to this paradox is to recognize the discontinuity and heterogeneity of the trace to its originating referent, to the event. The appearance of the trace then would be a past that has never been present, a past which no memory, no thing could resurrect, capture, represent as present. It is rather bound to the future, always coming after, opening onto a horizon that exceeds its referent. But nor does the trace have a phenomenal presence or plenitude. The materiality that the trace assumes is then witness to the fracture of its own condition. But if the trace itself is heterogeneous, what then of the archive and what properly belongs to the archive and its authority as authorized evidence of an event? Does not the archive require for its well-being a repression of this distance, a distance recognized within the failure of the testimonial to attest to anything but its own survival and hence a distance from that which has disappeared? Yet, the archive cannot admit the testimonial for this reason. It will appeal to the notion, as Ricoeur does, that the trace is bound to its originating referent, the unique moment of truth that occurs prior to the separation of origin and representation.

Correspondingly, the concept of the document, as Allan Sekula has suggested in writing on the photographic archive, 'entails a notion of legal or official truth, as well as a notion of proximity to and verification of an original event'.<sup>7</sup> Photography reflects the truth of that which it represents either by viewing a linear progression from past to present or by virtue of the fact that the camera as a mechanical form of reproduction provides a 'source of factual knowledge' and 'objective evidence'.<sup>8</sup> The document it produces therefore becomes the source and foundation of the archive and the archive itself authorizes the veracity of the document through its incorporation. Photography and the archive function interdependently in so far as both entail transferring the world to image. Tied to the referent, the photographic trace secures its livelihood and becomes critical to the practice and authority of the modern archive.

Understood in this manner, photography becomes a dangerous supplement to that of memory. In fact, Pierre Nora proposes that modern memory depends 'entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image'.<sup>9</sup> But whereas Sekula argues for a dismantling of a photograph's claims, Nora wishes to recover 'real environments of memory'.<sup>10</sup> As he writes: 'with the appearance of the trace, of mediation, of distance, we are not in the realm of true memory but of history'.<sup>11</sup> Reproducing the world as witness to itself, photography becomes disconnected and displaces the social practice of oral tradition and conceals its heterogeneous condition as sign. Modern technologies of memory stress the individual's interiorization of the

past as the collective milieu of memory vanishes. The result is social amnesia and a lack of possibilities for collective action because there are neither links to one another, nor investment in the past that one might share with another. This produces what Nora describes as the 'terrorism of historicized memory' in which 'all *lieux de mémoire* are objects *mise-en-abîme*'.<sup>12</sup>

For the Arechi poets, the answer to this 'terrorism of historicized memory' was not to seek a 'true memory'. There was no 'true memory' prior to the originating division of the events surrounding Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Not that memory or the event could be original or fixed. Rather, the desire to record, to document, to form an archive of the events surrounding Nagasaki and Hiroshima will entail an admission that all inscriptional forms serve as a necessary supplement to memory, but can never serve as sufficient to that which has passed. They will always come after the fact. Writing becomes, as Jean-François Lyotard has remarked, the memory that never forgets that there is the forgotten and never stops writing its failure to remember and to fashion itself according to memory. Writing could only appear out of a condition of erasure. Erasure becomes the constitutive condition of their work. What they sought to maintain was a historical discontinuity: an unbinding of history that would also entail the unbinding of memory and its forms of inscription. For the Arechi, this meant that the dead could never be rendered as subject and hence occupied a place of absolute exteriority, a place that exists by virtue of the lack of continuity between past and future.<sup>13</sup> It is precisely the heterogeneity of the trace that Naoki Sakai and his Arechi poets seek to expose, for fear of the kind of social amnesia otherwise produced. How does one defer, construct an historical record that refuses too to fix itself within the past, but equally actively estranges itself from the present?

The loss of human lives and defeat as a nation marked a traumatic division that haunted post-war Japan. For Sakai, one of the challenges for the Arechi poets was how not to be integrated into the post-war collective representation that *incorporated* the dead, a fiction of collective sympathy.<sup>14</sup> Through their writing the Arechi disrupted the post-war formation of a patriotism that, as a form of collective representation, was based on the nation's destruction as the zero point of origin, an absolute beginning. What begins as a desire to commemorate the dead becomes a need to repress historical understanding and the traumatic division caused by Japan's defeat. Sakai has proposed that the Arechi poets sought to 'guard the silence of the dead rather than their words.'<sup>15</sup> As Masao wrote in one of his poems:

The shadow has no feet,  
no feet even as small as a rat's  
no feet with one in the past and one in the future

It is not that the feet have no shadow but that the originating source has itself disappeared. We are left only with a trace that seems to float, as if unmoored from space and time. Masao refuses to ground the trace to that which has passed. It exposes the gaping hole between event and archive. It is discontinuous with the past, belonging to a future as yet determined. Such loss of certainty is to admit that there is within the order of inscription already a spacing, a movement of differentiation that is neither past nor future, a spacing that is present. What then are we left with? What is the legacy or heritage that is passed on, and what does it tell us about the past and present? Such questions will preoccupy the photographers who emerge in the post-war period, as if defining their work in the light of Nietzsche's conception of heritage. Paraphrasing Nietzsche, Foucault wrote that heritage was 'not an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather, it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath.'<sup>16</sup>

### First exposure

In the 1950s, the photographic realist movement in Japan emerged in direct response to the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the humiliation of defeat and US occupation. One of its principle exponents was Ken Domon, who was sent on assignment by *Shukan Shincho* magazine to photograph the survivors (the hibakusha) who experienced their daily lives in the shadow of the atomic bomb. In 1957, he visited the hospitals in Hiroshima devoted to the survivors; he photographed the scars, treatment and surgical operations left on the bodies of the city's populace. Following his visit, Domon observed, 'I realized that it was not that I had forgotten anything; I never knew the reality of Hiroshima in the first place.'<sup>17</sup> Published as the photo-essay 'Hiroshima' in 1958, such work makes a powerful claim for its privileged access to the real and to knowledge. It becomes a document, a repository of a certain truth to the real. The wounds left on the bodies of the survivors become a trace of the effects of atomic radiation. They represent a 'legacy of evidence',<sup>18</sup> a document that appears to bear witness to the events of 1945.

In 1961 a selection of Domon's photographs were published alongside those of Shomei Tomatsu. The book was entitled *Hiroshima-Nagasaki Document 61*.<sup>19</sup> The use of the word 'document' in the title of the publication is purposeful. It suggests objectivity, a veracity whose status qualifies it as part of the archival record, a claim that is underpinned by the textual supplement. Moreover, by linking the two cities devastated by the bomb in 1945 together with 'document 61', it occupies a dual temporality, a form of dialogue between the event and its aftermath, an archival document within the present tense. However, the contrast

between the work of Domon and of Tomatsu could not have been greater and pointed to the beginning of a change in the concept of photography's claim as a document and therefore archival status.

Tomatsu had begun his work on Nagasaki in 1960 when he visited the city under the request of the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. What they needed was a contemporary account, an account of the aftermath and vestiges that remained some 15 years after the dropping of the bomb. No one had recorded Nagasaki in this way and the idea of a more direct engagement with everyday life characterized the outlook of Tomatsu and the activities of VIVO, a photographic group and agency that he co-founded in 1957.<sup>20</sup> Later, Tomatsu wrote of his experience on visiting Nagasaki for the first time that 'Looking at this restored city, it is difficult to imagine that atomic bomb-scape. But I have seen those ruins hidden in the deepest recesses of the resurrected city.'<sup>21</sup> How different then is this remark from that of Domon who speaks of how visiting the hospitals revealed a reality of Hiroshima he had never known. The present is the reality of the past. It is a window onto the past, exposed to the human eye and photography. In distinction Tomatsu avers that the photographs reveal what has been hidden from view: the moment of the original scarring that can only now be seen. Photography becomes forensic in exposing the wound. Resurrected, the landscape, cityscape and body nonetheless bear testimony to the traumatic past. Like psychoanalysis, archaeology and the forensic sciences, photography unearths the remaining evidence. It reveals the traces and produces an inventory that will serve as an index to contemporary Japanese history.<sup>22</sup>

In 1966, Tomatsu published his own book based on the photographs he took in 1961. Entitled '<11.02> Nagasaki', it is constructed as a complete work, an essay in photography, each image accompanied by a brief caption and grouped in series interspersed by texts. The photographs of objects themselves are accompanied by only a brief descriptive text, almost clipped to the point of severity noting the relation between object and event. One of the most emblematic images in the series was that of a wristwatch that had been dug up in Uenomachi, close to the epicentre of where the atomic bomb had been dropped on Nagasaki 21 years before. The watch had stopped at that moment, 11.02 AM. Marking the moment as the event of August 9th, 1945. The image captures the violent compression of time frozen within the object. It becomes not only a fragment of the past recovered within the present, but of the utter destruction between time.

The first grouping of images in the book is of scorched objects distorted and transformed by the explosion of the bomb; this is followed by a two-page text that gives with precise detail what happened on the morning of August 9th.

There are numbers and statistics of how many died, how many were burnt, how many were injured, of what happened to the houses, to the buildings, to people. This is followed by another group of images, body parts and objects and an eyewitness account of what was seen on August 9th. Moving through the book, the reader is introduced to other dimensions of Nagasaki, filling out the photographer's portrait of the city. There are fragments of statues, alleyways, scenes of daily life amongst the ruins, the seaport, the men packing fish, children playing, people working, images of survivors waiting and written texts by those who recount the day or speak of what they cannot forget. Very few of the images are presented directly. In some instances, the camera appears almost to brush the surface of the object or conversely draws back to view it from above. Other times the image emerges out of a blackened background. The angles are oblique, indirect, partial: parts of exposed bodies, half-covered faces. Towards the end, there is a group of American soldiers marching, and another of a Japanese woman and child next to American sailors. The book closes with an image of a docked US aircraft carrier loaded up with fighter jets.

The archive is in the living that surrounds the survivors. Nagasaki becomes the archive, the repository of history: a world where the animate and inanimate fuse together or mingle in mute silence towards each other's presence. There is, moreover, a contrast yet relation to be found between those who survived, carrying the scars of the past and the reconstructed city under US occupation. Tomatsu wrote later, 'In Nagasaki, I witnessed not only the vestiges of war, but a post-war without end. I once believed that "ruins" were cities reduced to ashes. Nagasaki taught me that ruins can also be found in the human soul.'<sup>23</sup> This dimension of Tomatsu's photographs is what has led commentators to remark on his 'existential' or subjective point of view.<sup>24</sup> We may also define it as humanizing his subject, of seeking to establish the human meaning of the bomb as distinct from a form of reporting that in an account of the empirical evidence Tomatsu uses the flash of the camera as if replicating the flash of the atomic radiation. As with the photograph captioned 'Yamaguchi Senji who was injured 1.2 km from the epicentre of the blast, Nagasaki 1962', the face turns away from the camera, exposing the scarred tissue of skin in its light. Unlike the clinical realism of Domon, Tomatsu seeks to view his subject in a post-clinical manner, not to portray the people as victims, but as a 'theory of civilization', 'victims of the tragedy of humankind.'<sup>25</sup> The image of the scarred face and body is about the event, but it is also about an archaeological practice of recovery. The image of the scarred body becomes the equivalent of the ruins and damaged objects, each irreversibly marked by the past. The scar becomes a form of citation that forges a link with a past. But whereas archaeology will produce a system of temporal classification and narrative coherence out of the fragments, the use of citation by

Tomatsu is a way of acknowledging the broken line, the discontinuities buried in historical narrative.

The flash of the camera restages, repeats the originating traumatic scene.<sup>26</sup> It is as if his images correspond to the expression used to describe trauma as 'unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with mental schemes, and be transferred into narrative language'.<sup>27</sup> Cathy Caruth writes of the 'traumatic event' as 'not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event.'<sup>28</sup> The images are vestiges, what is carried forward or remains after the destruction. It is a departure from the point of origin – the event. They are nonetheless signs that can be read, can be traced back. Meaning is made out of scraps and traces; traces become the residual shell of evidence.

Tomatsu's work subtly inverts the idea of a 'legacy of evidence'. Legacy becomes the key pointing not so much to the objects as to living with the experience of something that has passed and yet has had such devastating effects, something therefore far more intangible and only captured in the testimonial statements of the textual accompaniment. The images and texts switch back and forth between then and now, between act and archive. The testimonials, the eyewitness account animate the images; they provide the context for the evidence, the documentation. Conversely, the objects function as metonymic signs of the experience related in the testimonials. They are inseparable as if engendering one another. The event of the past is brought forward and contained within the present. There is a continuum, although it is hidden from view. The photographer himself has noted that 'there are two different times in Nagasaki. The time which stopped on 9th of August at 11.02, and the present, progressing time. We must never forget these two times.' It is an 'event of the past but also a pain which still exists today.'<sup>29</sup> But Tomatsu warns against the weathering of time, of its erosion: 'we must try not to neglect resisting.'<sup>30</sup> The event that occurred has frozen in time, but time has of course not frozen. It continues and in the process memory weakens. What Tomatsu wants is 'to build a dam against the flow of time with our will and pull back the time during which memory weakened'. For this reason Tomatsu will for many years after continue to photograph the subject, as if only by virtue of its repetition it remains present and is not buried in the 'folds of history'.

### Second Exposure

On the day marking the twentieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, Kawada Kikuji, who had also been a member of VIVO alongside Tomatsu, published his photo-essay 'The Map'.<sup>31</sup> Like '<11.02> Nagasaki', Kawada

conceived of 'The Map' as a photo-essay, a total object. At the beginning of his photo-book he writes, 'We have been adrift in an age of courage, ambition, action, even without beautiful memories. Question: Where do we find our map today, our vision, our shining order?'<sup>32</sup> As if by way of answering the question, Kawada presents two types of images, emblematic of the war and the post-war era. The first images are the ruins left by the atomic bomb; the photographs of the dead, the bombed-out buildings, the crumbling surfaces; while the second are those of the detritus of a consumer-based American culture, such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi bottles, bottle caps, lucky-strike boxes.

Throughout the book, the black and white photographs are close-up shots of objects, surfaces, barely discernible fragments, alongside other images including a portrait of a Japanese Kamikaze commando with his personal effects, a Japanese flag, and the ceiling of the Atomic-bomb Memorial Dome. Such images are already inscribed with value and Kawada's inclusion of these images functions as a purposeful re-engagement with recent Japanese history. Once symbols of pride, they have been transformed into images of defeat. Kawada's subject is, in other words, not the survivor, the eyewitness account, and the aftermath of living on. Rather, it is about the theatre of war, of destruction and remembrance. He puts these symbols back into circulation, but now as mementos that have lost their patina, their sense of presence. They are tarnished images of a past. The commando appears by virtue of a family photograph, the flag no longer flying high but crumpled as if vanquished, and the Memorial Dome that had been built as an Industry Promotion Hall: a symbol of Japanese modernization and modernism has been reduced to ruins. The central and recurring motif of Kawada's book is this Memorial Dome, so called after the building had been reduced to ruin by the bomb. What remained were the brick walls, the exposed iron frame, and the dome canopy itself, ruins which had been kept as they were throughout the post-war reconstruction era and hence as a reminder of the war.<sup>33</sup> The remains of the building were incorporated as a ruin into Hiroshima's commemorative site, the Peace Memorial Park.<sup>34</sup> The ruins of the dome are preserved and incorporated into a memorial complex: a cenotaph, museum and archive. The site becomes a form of collective representation that incorporates the dead, and the ruins of the Dome function as the original referent around which the other buildings gain their meaning and historical value.

Within this context, the structure of the book takes on its full impact and significance. Every second spread throughout the book is composed of folded pages that require opening to reveal the images beneath. An image of the sky covers grainy details of a corroded and crumbled wall surface, television monitors overlay ID photos of Japanese soldiers or Coca-Cola bottles are followed by the inside of a building. The book as document houses the

monument, as it were, forming an armature to what remains. Kawada dramatizes different objects, different ways of seeing, different values. Two kinds of economies appear, one leading to and exposing the other: economies of expenditure, of a surplus and a wasting. Opening the pages is like opening the doors into the heart of the monument to reveal nothing but a ruin. Kawada's book returns over and over to imaging in close proximity the walls as if they are the very surface with its burnt and pitted surfaces, its crumbling masonry, its cracks and fissures. It is in relation to this that the other images function as marks of erasure, exposing the discontinuity between document and history, between memory and remembrance. These marks interfere with the trace, because they bear the conditions of the appearance of the trace, the wear and tear of the passage, of its temporal existence, its transit, and the housing or material conditions by which it was carried. As such, the mark loses something of the past and at the same time accrues signs of its passage in time. Strictly speaking, then, it is both more and less.

The temporality of the document appears to carry some residue of the past into the future: a passageway in and across time. If so, the document would serve not only as a space of arrival, but equally as a point of departure. Is it not therefore always haunted by the passing of time, or by its own passage from one time to another? That which has produced the trace passes. It becomes the past, leaving a mark which represents, although it is not the same as a trace. Marks are the evidence of this passage, and a trace of the past. The document therefore carries forward not evidence of the past so much as that something has passed, and it shows us something that even the past may not have recognized till now, too late. There is a sense of a deferred temporality, a strange suspension of time that within the present is an uncovering not so much of revelation of an originating event or cause as that of recognition. The use of the fold returns us to the subject of repression.<sup>35</sup> What appears residual – fragments, ruins, marks – is by virtue of erasure. They are the effect of erasure. The practice of unfolding and folding in Kawada's book suggests the work of repression within the archive. Different orders of reality, though one succeeding the other, coexist, and yet at the price of the repression of one. American occupation succeeds at the price of Japanese defeat. The covering of the images would perhaps be the work of amnesia, of a certain forgetting just as the turning of the page requires the folding of that which appears as supplementary. Or one could more simply refuse to unfold the folded pages. There would then be no dangerous supplement, no disjunctive movement to disrupt the narrative closure of the book.

The construction of the book breaks with the prohibition which protects the mimetic dimension of reporting, that is, the documenting of the event and its admission into the archive on the basis of its claim over the real and hence an



evidential authority.<sup>36</sup> From this perspective, the work is not a project of remembrance seeking to preserve what would otherwise disappear. It concerns, rather, memory as an analysis of forgetting. Citation as repetition becomes the *mise-en-abyme* of representation. The recycling of images, their citation, then, is not about their assimilation into a memorial structure and archive, but is deployed to show the impossibility of a *lieux de mémoire*. Kawada's work points, rather, to how the photograph exposes a *non-jeux-de-mémoire* that belongs neither to the order of place nor memory. It derails any pact between memory and remembrance. The trauma of defeat and of loss is captured by the structure of repetition. In this sense we have moved already beyond the event, and the construction of the memorial site and archive constitutes a repressive process of forgetting and not of remembrance.

### Third Exposure

In 1968, Shomei Tomatsu organized an exhibition called 'One Hundred Years of Photography' for the Professional Photographers' Society of Japan, held at the Seibu Department Store. Two of his assistants were the writer Koji Taki and editor Nakahira Takuma.<sup>37</sup> In November of the same year Taki and Nakahira, along with the poet and art critic Takahiko Okada and photographer Yutaka Takanashi as co-editors, launched a magazine called *Provoked Provoke* 1 opens with a manifesto written by Taki and Nakahira and signed by all four. In it they write: 'Visual images are not ideological themselves. They cannot represent the totality of an idea, nor are they interchangeable like words. However, their irreversible materiality - reality cut out by the camera - belongs to the reverse side of the world of language. Photographic images, therefore, often unexpectedly stimulate language and ideas. Thus petrified language can transcend itself and become an idea, resulting in a new language and in a new idea ... a photographer's eye can capture fragments of reality that cannot be expressed in a language as it is. He can submit those images as documents to be considered alongside language and ideology.'<sup>39</sup>

One of the most powerful ideas here is that there is something unique about photography's irreversible materiality yet discontinuous relation to the real, and that this rift from reality in fact stimulates new language and ideas about the way we view the world. The manifesto is followed by an essay by Okada entitled 'I Cannot See, My Heart breaks, I Want to Fly', three black and white photo-essays by Taki, Takanashi and Nakahira under the title 'Summer 1968', and a closing essay, 'The Decay of the Intellect', by Taki.<sup>40</sup> At first glance there is nothing that seems out of the ordinary about the three photo portfolios. They are, if anything, uneventful: images of people, landscapes, cityscapes, scenes of everyday life except that the focus is never quite clear, the images often blurred,

grainy, moving. The opening sequence often photographs by Taki is composed of double spreads, juxtapositions, and spliced images filled by blackness and shadow out of which figures emerge. It is a portrait of people, a collective representation and resolutely so; and yet, it begins with faces hidden from view, or eyes that are obscured or averted refusing to be accommodated by the photographic gaze. There is no safeguarding visibility as a guarantor of knowing the subject. In the context of the late sixties in Japan, the doubt cast over the visible is a radical challenge to a world of rapidly increasing saturation by images within the public sphere, of the advent of the society of the spectacle, as Guy Debord had speculated. But it is also driven by an avant-garde rejection of documentary realism that had dominated Japanese photography in the fifties, as in the case of Domon, amongst others, and ultimately the work of Tomatsu. For while the impact of Tomatsu cannot be underestimated in so far as his works constitute a departure from the realist aesthetic, his subjectivism was underwritten by a positivist belief in its veracity, and hence the power to reveal objective evidence and inviolable truths.

In March 1970, at the time of the opening of Expo '70 in Osaka, the Provoke group dissolved. Their final gesture was the publication of *First Abandon the World of Certainty*, in which all of the group's contributors participated. There were five photo portfolios under the heading *Provoke* interspersed with six texts entitled *Predict*. In the opening essay by Taki, he asks 'What is photography' and 'What can it accomplish.'<sup>41</sup> To this the author answers that the first question is bound by stasis and historicity, while the second demands a rupture with the past and yearns for revelation. Such a view takes us in two directions, first having to do with the debate around the claims and practice of photography as document, and the second with the possibility of an avant-garde practice. The author writes that: 'The photographer draws ever closer to an as yet invisible reality, like the protagonist of *Hiroshima mon amour*; who constantly asks himself 'Did you see? Did you not?' Seeing is no simple act. It requires a redefinition of one's relation to the world it inhabits. This is why the question 'What can photography accomplish?' always seeks the unknown. We tend to perceive photographs as fragments of the external world because the photographer is, for the present, limited to visible subjects. Yet the photographers accomplish an act steeped in contradiction, for while photographs are indeed no more than fragments, and no more than the visible, they call into question the meaning of all experience.'<sup>42</sup>

It is, in other words, the recognition that their partiality is also a condition of dependence upon the visible, and therefore serves as a powerful indicator of a reality that is not visible. What is, however, so unexpected in this text is the reference to the French film *Hiroshima mon amour*, written by Marguerite Duras

and directed by Alain Resnais. There is nothing that prepares us for this, no overt references in the texts nor photographs that directly engage with the event or effects. But it is precisely this lack or invisibility that is central to Taki's argument and philosophical engagement with photography.

Released in 1961, the same year as Tomatsu's first publication of his work on Nagasaki, *Hiroshima mon amour* is a love story between a French woman and a Japanese man who meet in Hiroshima. There is a peace convention being held (perhaps the very same one that sponsored the work of Tomatsu), but it impinges little on the story between the couple. The phrase 'did you see', to which the response is 'you have seen nothing in Hiroshima', punctuates the dialogue between the couple. It is a conversation about remembrance and forgetting. Surrounded by a Hiroshima that had once been ruin and ashes, the film is a love story about the necessity to accept the power to forget as part of the narrative of remembering: that to live today, now, within the present means being able to live with this. The French woman remembers her own past, consisting of an illicit love and loss during the war, but only by means of the beginning of a new story in Hiroshima. Writing about her script, Duras observes that 'Nothing is given at Hiroshima. Every word gesture, every word, takes on an aura of meaning that transcends its literal meaning. And this is one of the principal goals of the film: to have done with the description of the horror, for that has been done by the Japanese themselves, but make this horror rise again from its ashes by incorporating it in a love that will necessarily be special and wonderful, one that will be more credible than if it had occurred anywhere else in the world, a place that death had not preserved.'<sup>43</sup>

Taki's reference to the film marks a radical break from the bracketing of photography with the concept of the document and archive. As in the film, what is to be seen of the events of the war is no longer to be found simply within the regime of the visible. Nor can they be uncovered or exposed as if to reveal what has been buried or repressed as in the work of Tomatsu and Kawada respectively. The refusal to name or identify is to point towards that which can never be visible, never be present: the unconscious. It is therefore about the fissure that breaks with historical time, that constructs itself as the disjunctive present, so that there can be no continuum, no integration or synthesis into a new totality, but rather a language to come. It is as, Blanchot remarks, about writing: 'Erased before being written. If the word trace can be admitted, /it is as the index that would indicate as erased what was, however/never traced. All our writing ... would be this: an anxious search for/what was never written in the present, but in a past to come.'<sup>44</sup>

In 1970 Nakahira extended his portfolio that he had published in the first issue of *Provoke* into a photo-book entitled *For a Language to Come*. It is the first

monographic book produced by one of the members of *Provoke*, and a quintessential product of the group's philosophy. In this regard, the book is not about Hiroshima, Nagasaki, or the war. It does not picture reality as transparent, given or even belonging to individual perception. It is neither realist nor surrealist. Composed of some 160 double black and white spreads with a text at the end, it constitutes a sustained engagement with a land and cityscapes caste in shadow and movement. The majority of the photographs have been taken at night. Scenes appear and disappear in the blinding white light or reflect in the pools of water and the myriad surfaces of the street and dark interiors of shops, bars, or underground. The light appears at times like fire that burns brightly along the horizon of the landscape or engulfs the objects within its radius. Images are enlarged to the point where they begin to give way to the blur and grain of their very constitution. Other images are collages, constructed out of disparate sources. In this sense, the work is demonstrably photographic; the light both discloses and blinds, brings the viewer close yet forever at a distance. Accompanying the photographs was an essay by Okada, his friend and co-editor of *Provoke*, entitled 'On Landscapes.' Okada writes of the profound sense of alienation present in the photographs of Nakahira, of a reality that seemed to be forever outside his grasp. Photography could not be a work of revelation.

Three quarters of the way through the book Nakahira places a double spread of a curving dirt road that leads towards distant buildings in a wintry landscape. Almost identical images are used on each page. There are tire tracks on the dirt road, evidence of rain, maybe water to the far right. It is a desolate scene, a wasteland, abstract, as if refusing to signify, to construe meaning of what is seen, of the visible. The photograph is badly printed, blotched and scarred by chemicals, and scratched by lines across its surface which at a point in the horizon line form some kind of emerging form but without any sense that it belongs to the rest of the image. On looking again, one realizes that the two photographs are almost identical; almost, not quite. The repetition of itself also marks the reproductive condition of the work. It displaces authorship. Moreover, the point of view between the two photographs is slightly different. The camera has been tilted forward to show more of the road. But, in essence, it reveals nothing more; there is no difference, except less light on the road and above the horizon line what appear to be straight and curving scratch marks that at once deface the work but belong to the process of alteration to which Nakahira subjects the photograph. By virtue of this intervention, the photograph is transformed into something less than a document and more of a trace.

Nakahira reveals a world in constant movement, differing point of views twisting and turning to capture passing moments, objects, scenes. He portrays a world in flux in which nothing is stable. The image of the sea punctuates the

book. Within its first few pages, there is a woman sitting on a couch. She is close to the camera, and a mirror reflects her as she turns her face beneath the gaze of the camera. On the opposing page, a plane streams over the sea at night. The sea appears again, darkened, obscure, with an industrial landscape running along its horizon line and then later with a ship bellowing out a cloud of black smog. Nakahira ends the book with a series of images of the edge of the sea, the edge of the road, the landscape disappearing into the sea.

*For a Language to Come* becomes a work of *cinema vérité*, a portrait of Japan in which every image assumes an equivalence in value, where residues of memory and significance are given the same register as the ephemerality of light and movement. Images of desolation, a desolation that infects and permeates the book so that nothing is certain. It is a wasteland, no longer having to do with the post-war devastation portrayed by the Arechi poets, but now amidst the garish lights of commerce and consumerism, an industrial wasteland that postwar modernization has brought.

As part of an emergent avant-garde practice, Nakahira's work and that of *Provoke* disrupt photography's claim over the real. And yet while the 'irreversible materiality' of their images displaces the notion of individual expression with that of the record or document, this too never finds solid ground or clarity. Rather, they produce a world and point of view that is never complete, in constant flux as if raw, coming into being in the moment of its appearance. It is a cut from reality but precisely for this reason it separates itself from the real. This representational insufficiency disturbs the archive, as defined by Ricoeur and put into the service of photographers such as Tomatsu. The archive remains always incomplete; while the trace always refers to something that lies outside of itself, of a radical separation or erasure, the document, legitimized as material evidence, serves as both reference and supplement to something else that may or may not exist any longer. This means to critically transform the real, shifting the marks of a wound that are always spectrally present so as not to become nostalgically identified with a time before and with muteness. To create new forms of critical incidence that contain the image of this destruction without remaining contemplatively adhered to it. It means to rescue the present from itself owing to the heterogeneity of the actual, a present that always contains cultural identities yet diffuse presences. It means to produce a different kind of document that attests to both a disappearing past and an uncertain future.

### Conclusion

The photographic practice and photo-essays of Tomatsu, Kawada and the *Provoke* group each disrupt the proximity to an original event. Together, the projects encroach on the domain of the document as a 'record' of the past or the

present. And while Tomatsu seeks to align testimony to that of the document in order to rescue memory from its fateful path of forgetfulness, together they recognize the impossibility that representation in whatever form – collectively or otherwise – can attest to memory or what has passed. They denaturalize the image so that it is unable to make a claim over the real. The images function better as traces, in order to expose an aporetic interval within the archive and the archival paradigm to which the document belongs. The gaps and absences are a form of evidence, but evidence of their own partiality, incompleteness. There can be no synthesis in the archive; rather, it bears traces and evidence of a disrupted continuity. The photograph, unlike other signs, introduces this disruption or disorder because it always carries the referent within itself, a sign of disjunctive temporalities. Such works as those discussed concern what falls outside of or is not within the visible order, that which is made invisible or effaced by the presence of the photographic document in the archive.

In such terms, there is an incommensurability that lies at the heart of defining the document, archive, and trace. This incommensurability is not about the impossibility of telling history but, rather, in locating a temporal anachronism that constitutes a form of excess in both the referent and its representation yet, nonetheless and paradoxically, an excess that leaves a caesura between the two. Beginning with Tomatsu, these photographers expose the silence and caesura within the historical record. This caesura is an interval or unmarked spacing between the event or referent and its signification, separating the present from what it is not: an in-between time and in-between space. And if Tomatsu seeks to fill this space with objects as if re-animating them with the life of the past while Kawada exposes a nation whose heritage has been left in ruin, the *Provoke* group suggest a transitory space where the object world has given way to a world of constant mutability and uncertainty. There is no thing that offers stability, no document that provides a stable presence. There is rather a spacing that cannot be filled, a haunted twilight world out of which figures and objects appear and disappear in a force field of flux and transformation. Each photo-essay enters the archive as if by night, disturbing the guardians of official history written in the light of empirical truth. They constitute a new kind of archive, an archive of the unconscious, an archive of the avant-garde or an avant-garde archive.

- 1 The translation is by Naoki Sakai. See his wonderful chapter 'Death and Poetic Language in Postwar Japan' in *Translation and Subjectivity: On 'Japan' and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967) 177–92.
- 2 Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lynette Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 76.

- 3 Paul Ricoeur, citing *Encyclopedia Universalis* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (vol. 3), trans. Kathleen Blarney and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 116.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 119.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 7 Allan Sekula, 'Photography between Labour and Capital', in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio Glace Bay, Cape Brecon 1948-1968*. Photographs by Leslie Shedden. Edited by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University of Cape Breton Press, 1983) 199.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', in *Representations*, 26 (Spring 1989)13. This is the introduction to the three-volume work *The Realms of Memory* (Columbia University Press).
- 10 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 14; 20.
- 13 Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, *op cit.*, 185.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 183-4.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 185.
- 16 Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History', in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York 1977) 146.
- 17 Cited in Ryuichi Kaneko, 'The Half-life of Awareness: Photographs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki', in: *The Half-Life of Awareness, Photographs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, 1995) 23.
- 18 This phrase is used by Alexandra Munroe in her essay 'Postwar Japanese photography and the pursuit of consciousness.' See *daido moriyama: stray dog* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999) 34.
- 19 It also included reproductions of paintings by Iri and Toshi Maruki from their 'Genbaku no Zu' series.
- 20 There were five other photographers in the group: Narahara Ikko, Hosoe Eikoh, Saro Akira, Tanno Akira and Kawada Kikuji. The group dissolved in 1961. Tomatsu's photos of Nagasaki were shown at the Fuji Photo Salon in Tokyo in 1962.
- 21 Cited in *Half-Life of Awareness*, *op. cit.*, 135.
- 22 For a discussion of the correspondences in method between the forensic sciences, psychoanalysis and art history see Carlo Ginzburg's seminal essay 'Clues, Roots of an Evidential Paradigm', in: *Myths, Emblems, Clues* (London: Hutchinson, 1986) 96-125. For its application within contemporary art practices see also my essay 'Traces of Loss' in *Irresistible Decoy*, edited by Michael Roth (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1998).

- 23 Tomatsu, 'Genjidai no kurisuto' (Christ in the nuclear age), in *Nagasaki 11:02 Augusts, 1945: Photographs by Shomei Tomatsu*, translated by Linda Hoaglund (Tokyo: Shinchosha Photo Museum, 1986), not paginated.
- 24 See the descriptions of Tomatsu's work in the essays by Alexandra Munroe and Sandra Phillips 'daido moriyamas: stray dog' in *daido moriyama: stray dog*, *op.cit.* Munroe also points out that the critic Tatsuo Fukushima who had organized exhibitions of the VIVO group, was a proponent of the existentialist writers Sartre and Camus, both of whom were well known in Japanese post-war literary and artistic circles, *op cit.*, 40.
- 25 Linda Hoaglund, Interview with Shomei Tomatsu, *Positions*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Winter 1997) 846.
- 26 Tomatsu's portraits of people who avert the gaze of the camera are later captured in a photograph by Hiromi Tsuchida of a man whose back is to the camera, gazing out across the dock. The caption below reads: 'Declined to be photographed or interviewed.' We would of course not know that the subject was a Hiroshima survivor except for the fact that it belongs to a series of photographs of survivors and first person accounts of the living through the moment of 1945. Such portraits suggest a subjective dimension. The subject is not passive in response to the camera, but on the contrary actively disengages. In that sense, the images are about the future.
- 27 B.A. van der Kolk/Onno van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma', *American Image*, 48, no. 4, (1991) 447.
- 28 Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', *American Image*, 48, no. 1, (1991) 3.
- 29 Shomei Tomatsu, *Hiroshima-nagasaki document 61*. *op. cit.*
- 30 Shomei Tomatsu, 'Introduction' to *11.02 Nagasaki*. Shashinodo-jin-sha, 1966).
- 31 The first edition of 700 copies had a loosely inserted broadside entitled Map by Kenzaburo Oe. Tomatsu and Kawada were contemporaries with the former being born in 1930 and the latter in 1933.
- 32 One of the most public and infamous of responses to this sentiment was that of the writer Mishima Yukio who committed suicide in 1970. Mishima sought to recuperate the past, to overcome the humiliation of defeat - to relive or repeat the past as a way of redeeming Japan of loss and those who died defending the nation.
- 33 In the years immediately following Kawada's book, the Dome became the object of considerable debate as to whether it should be preserved. See Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 70.
- 34 The park was designed by Tange Kenzo and opened in 1949. Its ceremonial design was based on a north-south axis that ran from the cenotaph through to the dome. The dome building was given its name due to its dome-shaped canopy.
- 35 Jacques Derrida discusses the relation of repression to the archive in *Archive Fever* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For an elaboration on this subject, see my essay 'A Lasting Impression' in *Trace*, ed. Tony Bond, (Liverpool Biennale, 1999) 164-71.
- 36 Conceptual art in Japan as it emerged during the 1960s used photography stressing its indexical form and its relation to the everyday and mundane. In particular, Nomura Hitoshi sought to

disavow any meaning to what is recorded... where the issue of expression is located in 'all aspects of life, wherein an act of making is articulated in real time.' See Reiko Tomii, 'Concerning the Institution of Art: Conceptualism in Japan', in: *Global Conceptualism* (New York: Queen's Museum of Art, 1999) 26.

- 37 Koji Taki was an art critic and Takuma Nakahira an editor of the magazine *Gendaino Me* (*Contemporary View*).
- 38 *Provoke* magazine lasted for three issues only. The final issue appeared in August 1969 and the group disbanded on the eve of Expo '70 held in Osaka in March 1970.
- 39 *Provoke*, 1 (1968) 2.
- 40 Nakahira received his first camera as a wedding gift from Tomatsu and his first instructions on how to photograph from daido moriyama.
- 41 The translation is by Linda Hoaglund as published in Andrew Roth, *Provoke*, Exhibition catalogue (New York, 1999) 5.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 7-8.
- 43 Marguerite Duras, cited in Caroline Mohsen, 'Place, Memory and subjectivity in Marguerite Duras' *Hiroshima mon amour*, in: *Romantic Review*, vol. 89, no. 4 (1998) 578.
- 44 Maurice Blanchot, *The Step not Beyond*, *op. cit.*, 17.

Charles Merewether, 'A Language to Come: Japanese Photography After the Event', *interarchive. Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Diethelm Stoller, Ulf Wuggenig (Lüneberg: Kunstraum der Universität/Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2002) 168-76.

## Patricia Levin and Jeanne Perrault 'The Camera Made Me Do It': Nicole Jolicoeur, Female Identity and Troubling Archives//2004

She has been hidden from our sight by so many veils ...  
– Ida Friedrike Gorres, *The Hidden Face*

Walking into the gallery space I was overcome by a sense of being watched – so many eyes upon me. I felt caught in an intense and utterly unexpected energy field. Across the thirty-nine foot expanse of wall were the images of the strangely distorted face of St Thérèse de Lisieux. Pinned to the wall, sometimes in odd pairs, the many faces of Thérèse as conceived by Nicole Jolicoeur cast their hypnotic gaze. Her contorted expressions had a disquieting effect. In one image her features took on a birdlike guise, sharp and threatening, in another the head seemed encephalitic, and in another her expression was taut and constipated. I had seen one or two of these images before but now in the gallery, the effect of the faces on the wall was very different. Standing in the highly activated spaces of the gallery, I could feel the power of those faces to move me, to make me feel both uncomfortable and entranced. The strangeness of these faces is disconcerting for while they are clearly fabricated by the artist – we can see that the images have been cut and reassembled – they effect an uncanny realism.  
– Patricia Levin, note on visit to the artist's studio, Montréal, October 2003

Jolicoeur's work titled *Déprises I (Thérèse)* (1999) makes use of the recently publicized nineteenth-century photographs from the archives at the Carmelite convent where Thérèse was a nun. Jolicoeur selected individual photographs of Thérèse as a young girl and then at different moments of her short life. The photographs of faces she laid on a paper cutting machine and cut horizontally, sometimes vertically, sometimes at an angle. Then she reassembled fragments, putting together new faces.

Images of the saint were familiar from Jolicoeur's French Canadian Roman Catholic girlhood. 'She was a model impossible to live up to' the artist says.<sup>1</sup> Jolicoeur's literal recollecting of St Thérèse mimed the act of reminiscence through the performative repetition of fixing, unfixing, and reassembling. Her purposeful reworking of the face of St Thérèse, intentionally rendering it into distorted and deformed variations of a subject, made us ask: just who was being remembered?

In an early photograph (1888), Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin is the perfect picture of bourgeois femininity, well dressed and well mannered. The

photograph was made when Thérèse was fifteen years old, just a few days before she entered the Carmelite convent of Lisieux, where she lived until her death in 1897. When she was canonized in 1925, Thérèse Martin became known as St Thérèse de Lisieux or St Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. Beatified for her adherence to 'little things', invisibility, and private spaces, until 1961 she was known, not by this photograph, nor the other 46 photographs of her in the archives at Lisieux, but by a sentimentalized painting. The image, made expressly to represent the idealization of Thérèse, was a 'conscientious synthesis, chosen with the greatest of care' from the most expressive elements contained in various photographs and considered by the Carmelite sisters to be 'the most beautiful'.<sup>2</sup> This painting was made in 1911 by Sister Genevieve, Thérèse's sister and the photographer responsible for the all of the images of Thérèse made at the convent. It bears very little, if any, resemblance to the photographs of Thérèse. Painting, as an elevated form of representation, was the only acceptable form for transmitting an image of sanctity in the early twentieth century.

Today one can visit the official Web site for Thérèse and view the photographic reproductions, each of which is available for purchase in the form of prayer cards, bookmarks, posters, or framed photographs. The Web site itself makes use of these images to familiarize the viewer with the saint's life story. The traditional devotional image, its usefulness diminished by the ubiquitous photograph, is nowhere to be seen online. The various images of Thérèse serve to illustrate the changing nature of photography's reception over time: from the inadequacy of the photograph – its inability to render and fix an image of sainthood, to transform flesh into icon – to the effectiveness of the photograph, now in the age of disbelief, to prove that the icon was once flesh and blood. The photographic archives of Thérèse illustrate the flexibility of the photograph as both object and sign.

Thérèse Martin's seemingly uneventful life was transformed into the hagiographical model for twentieth-century Catholic womanhood. She became the ideal bourgeois embodiment of a single virtue, to be unknown, to remain virtually invisible, to produce 'only little things' and most of all, to exist in the private spaces of domesticity – the convent being the most extreme example of such a confined, private space. She was, after all, canonized for these 'little things'. In her journal, Thérèse wrote, 'True wisdom consists in desiring to be unknown and counted as nothing. I desire that my face be truly hidden that no one on earth know me'.<sup>3</sup> With these words, Thérèse expressed the virtuous piety of late nineteenth-century French bourgeois womanhood at the very moment when bourgeois womanhood was most threatened by the quickly changing conditions of modernity. Her devotional images circulated wide and far as a

visible reminder of an exemplary femininity.

Thérèse Martin remains unknown to us, but not in the way she wanted. Hidden by so many veils of others' desire, her image was manufactured and circulated to provide young Catholic women everywhere with a proper model of feminine piety as a perfectly malleable daughter, to be formed into whatever was required, and to remain unknown for herself. Nicole Jolicoeur's *Déprises I (Thérèse)* enacts the continual transformation of a face, demonstrating the flexibility of the face to become something other than itself. Thérèse has become the image of many different women in Jolicoeur's defacings; her presence has been multiplied by the various reconstructions. They no longer represent Thérèse but are now just so many constructions of women's faces, each with a particular presence. The eyes seem to look and see what they have been disallowed before. They evoke women everywhere who are the objects of investigating looks by way of a medical or libidinal economy that robs them of subjectivity. In the theatre of the gallery, they looked back at the viewer with eyes that challenge such crimes.

Jolicoeur uses photographic archives to intervene on behalf of the women who have been caught and categorized by its varied technologies. She troubles the archives she uses by collecting, disassembling, and recollecting, in different ways, what was once immobilized for preservation. She questions the authorized epistemologies by the act of remembering. Jolicoeur's repetitious performance of unfixing the face, by cutting and then reassembling it, foregrounds the hagiographical transformation of Thérèse Martin, in which a new face was designed to represent the beatified St Thérèse. For Jolicoeur, perhaps the work of making and remaking the face of Thérèse is meant to relieve the young woman of her hagiographical burden, to allow her to be unknown. Here, Jolicoeur literally defamiliarizes the images through a process of cutting and thus severing the face from the orthodoxy that ties the image of a young woman to a fabricated usefulness, through the act of making strange, to form new ambiguous becomings.

'The face, what a horror' – this might be an appropriate response to Jolicoeur's renderings of Thérèse's visage.<sup>4</sup> The significance of the face (the accepted understanding that in the face we can read the soul of an individual) marks the importance of portraiture in art. But in the hands of Jolicoeur, the portrait takes on new meaning. She handles the face as if it were a strange territory to be divided and reorganized, finally to be re-presented as surface. Her reworking of the face by showing it to be multiple makes it unrepresentable as a particular type. Jolicoeur prefers to open up the territorial configurations of a face, to make the face seen but not recognized, to make it both unfamiliar and obscure. The face is a construction, a fabrication that forces the duration of

perception by making strange. Jolicoeur's mining of the Thérésian archive challenges 'the tenacious myth that photography possesses a single, universally effective revelatory essence'.<sup>5</sup> There is no single face of Saint Thérèse de Lisieux, just the many faces of Thérèse Martin. [...]

- 1 Patricia Levin, note on visit to the artist's studio, Montréal, October 2003.
- 2 Ida Friederike Gorres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St Thérèse of Lisieux* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003) 26.
- 3 Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, *L'histoire d'une âme* (1899); 3rd English edition, trans. John Clarke, *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1996) 152.
- 4 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980); trans. Brian Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) 190.
- 5 Simon Watney, 'Making Strange: The Shattered Mirror', in Victor Burgin, ed., *Thinking Photography* (London: Macmillan, 1982) 176.

Patricia Levin and Jeanne Perrault, "The camera made me do it": female identity and troubling archives', *Mosaic*, vol. 37 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, December 2004) 137–41.

## Hal Foster An Archival Impulse//2004

Consider a temporary display cobbled together out of workday materials like cardboard, aluminium foil and packing tape, and filled, like a homemade study-shrine, with a chaotic array of images, texts and testimonials devoted to a radical artist, writer or philosopher. Or a funky installation that juxtaposes a model of a lost earthwork with slogans from the civil rights movement and/or recordings from the legendary rock concerts of the time. Or, in a more pristine register, a short filmic meditation on the huge acoustic receivers that were built on the Kentish coast between the World Wars, but soon abandoned as outmoded pieces of military technology. However disparate in subject, appearance and affect, these works – by the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn, the American Sam Durant, and the Englishwoman Tacita Dean – share a notion of artistic practice as an idiosyncratic probing into particular features, objects and events in modern art, philosophy and history.

The examples could be multiplied many times (a list of other practitioners might begin with the Scotsman Douglas Gordon, the Englishman Liam Gillick, the Irishman Gerard Byrne, the Canadian Stan Douglas, the Frenchmen Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, the Americans Mark Dion and Renée Green ... ), but these three alone point to an archival impulse at work internationally in contemporary art. This general impulse is hardly new: it was variously active in the pre-war period when the repertoire of sources was extended both politically and technologically (e.g., in the photofiles of Aleksandr Rodchenko and the photomontages of John Heartfield), and it was even more variously active in the post-war period, especially as appropriated images and serial formats became common idioms (e.g., in the pin-board aesthetic of the Independent Group, remediated representations from Robert Rauschenberg through Richard Prince, and the informational structures of Conceptual art, institutional critique and feminist art). Yet an archival impulse with a distinctive character of its own is again pervasive – enough to be considered a tendency in its own right, and that much alone is welcome.<sup>1</sup>

In the first instance archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end they elaborate on the found image, object and text, and favour the installation format as they do so. (Frequently they use its nonhierarchical spatiality to advantage – which is rather rare in contemporary art.) Some practitioners, such as Douglas Gordon, gravitate toward 'time readymades', that is, visual narratives that are sampled in image

projections, as in his extreme versions of films by Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorsese and others.<sup>2</sup> These sources are familiar, drawn from the archives of mass culture, to ensure a legibility that can then be disturbed or *détourné*; but they can also be obscure, retrieved in a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory. Such work will be my focus here.

Sometimes archival samplings push the postmodernist complications of originality and authorship to an extreme. Consider a collaborative project like *No Ghost Just a Shell* (1999–2002), led by Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno: when a Japanese animation company offered to sell some of its minor *manga* characters, they bought one such person-sign, a girl named 'AnnLee', elaborated this glyph in various pieces, and invited other artists to do the same. Here the project became a 'chain' of projects, 'a dynamic structure that produce[d] forms that are part of it'; it also became 'the story of a community that finds itself in an image' – in an image archive in the making.<sup>3</sup> French critic Nicolas Bourriaud has championed such art under the rubric of 'post-production', which underscores the secondary manipulations often constitutive of it. Yet the term also suggests a changed status in the work of art in an age of digital information, which is said to follow those of industrial production and mass consumption.<sup>4</sup> That such a new age exists as such is an ideological assumption; today, however, information does often appear as a virtual readymade, as so much data to be reprocessed and sent on, and many artists do 'inventory', 'sample' and 'share' as ways of working.

This last point might imply that the ideal medium of archival art is the mega-archive of the Internet, and over the last decade terms that evoke the electronic network, such as 'platforms' and 'stations', have appeared in art parlance, as has the Internet rhetoric of 'interactivity'. But in most archival art the actual means applied to these 'relational' ends are far more tactile and face-to-face than any Web interface.<sup>5</sup> The archives at issue here are not databases in this sense; they are recalcitrantly material, fragmentary rather than fungible, and as such they call out for human interpretation, not machinic reprocessing.<sup>6</sup> Although the contents of this art are hardly indiscriminate, they remain indeterminant, like the contents of any archive, and often they are presented in this fashion – as so many promissory notes for further elaboration or enigmatic prompts for future scenarios.<sup>7</sup> In this regard archival art is as much preproduction as it is postproduction: concerned less with absolute origins than with obscure traces (perhaps 'anarchival impulse' is the more appropriate phrase), these artists are often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects – in art and in history alike – that might offer points of departure again.

If archival art differs from database art, it is also distinct from art focused on the museum. Certainly the figure of the artist-as-archivist follows that of the

artist-as-curator, and some archival artists continue to play on the category of the collection. Yet they are not as concerned with critiques of representational totality and institutional integrity: that the museum is ruined as a coherent system in a public sphere is generally assumed, not triumphantly proclaimed or melancholically pondered, and some of these artists suggest other kinds of ordering – within the museum and without. In this respect the orientation of archival art is often more 'institutive' than 'destructive', more 'legislative' than 'transgressive'.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the work in question is archival since it not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well, and does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private. Further, it often arranges these materials according to a quasi-archival logic, a matrix of citation and juxtaposition, and presents them in a quasi-archival architecture, a complex of texts and objects (again, platforms, stations, kiosks ...). Thus Dean speaks of her method as 'collection', Durant of his as 'combination', Hirschhorn of his as 'ramification' – and much archival art does appear to ramify like a weed or a 'rhizome' (a Deleuzian trope that others employ as well).<sup>9</sup> Perhaps all archives develop in this way, through mutations of connection and disconnection, a process that this art also serves to disclose. 'Laboratory, storage, studio space, yes,' Hirschhorn remarks, 'I want to use these forms in my work to make spaces for the movement and endlessness of thinking ...'<sup>10</sup> Such is artistic practice in an archival field. [...]

A final comment on the will 'to connect what cannot be connected' in archival art.<sup>11</sup> Again, this is not a will to totalize so much as a will to relate – to probe a misplaced past, to collate its different signs (sometimes pragmatically, sometimes parodistically), to ascertain what might remain for the present. Yet this will to connect is enough alone to distinguish the archival impulse from the allegorical impulse attributed to postmodernist art by Craig Owens: for these artists a subversive allegorical fragmentation can no longer be confidently posed against an authoritative symbolic totality (whether associated with aesthetic autonomy, formalist hegemony, modernist canonicity, or masculinist domination). By the same token this impulse is not anomic in the manner disclosed in the work of Gerhard Richter and others by Benjamin Buchloh: the art at issue here does not project a lack of logic or affect.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, it assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial and provisional, to this end, even as it also registers the difficulty, at times the absurdity, of doing so.

This is why such work often appears tendentious, even preposterous. Indeed



its will to connect can betray a hint of paranoia – for what is paranoia if not a practice of forced connections and bad combinations, of my own private archive, of my own notes from the underground, put out on display?<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, these private archives do question public ones: they can be seen as perverse orders that aim to disturb the symbolic order at large. On the other hand, they might also point to a general crisis in this social law – or to an important change in its workings whereby the symbolic order no longer operates through apparent totalities. For Freud the paranoid projects meaning onto a world ominously drained of the same (systematic philosophers, he likes to imply, are closet paranoids).<sup>14</sup> Might archival art emerge out of a similar sense of a failure in cultural memory, of a default in productive traditions? For why else connect so feverishly if things did not appear so frightfully disconnected in the first place?<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the paranoid dimension of archival art is the other side of its utopian ambition – its desire to turn belatedness into becomingness, to recoup failed visions in art, literature, philosophy and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of a utopia. This partial recovery of the utopian demand is unexpected: not so long ago this was the most despised aspect of the modern(ist) project, condemned as totalitarian gulag on the Right and capitalist *tabula rasa* on the Left. This move to turn 'excavation sites' into 'construction sites' is welcome in another way too: it suggests a shift away from a melancholic culture that views the historical as little more than the traumatic.<sup>16</sup>

- 1 My title echoes Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Notes toward a Theory of Postmodernism', *October*, 12 and 13 (Spring and Summer 1980), as well as Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's *Atlas: The Anomic Archive*', *October*, 88 (Spring 1999) [reprinted in this volume, 85–102]. Yet the archival impulse here is not quite allegorical à la Buchloh; in some respects it assumes both conditions (more on which below). I want to thank the research group on archives convened by the Getty and the Clark Institutes in 2003–04, as well as audiences in Mexico City, Stanford, Berkeley and London.
- 2 Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Interviews*, vol. 1 (Milan: Charta, 2003) 322.
- 3 Philippe Parreno in Obrist, *Interviews*, 701.
- 4 See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002).
- 5 To take two prominent examples: the 2002 Documenta, directed by Okwui Enwezor, was conceived in the terms of 'platforms' of discussion, scattered around the world (the exhibition in Kassel was only the final such platform). And the 2003 Venice Biennale, directed by Francesco Bonami, featured such sections as 'Utopia Station', which exemplified the archival discursivity of much recent art. 'Interactivity' is an aim of 'relational aesthetics' as propounded by Bourriaud in

his 1998 text of that title. See my 'Arty Party', *London Review of Books*, 4 December 2003 [reprinted as 'Chat Rooms' in *Participation (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, ed. Claire Bishop (London: Whitechapel/Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006)], as well as Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, 110 (Fall 2004).

- 6 Lev Manovich discusses the tension between database and narrative in *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001) 233–6.
- 7 I owe the notion of 'promissory notes' to Malcolm Bull. Liam Gillick describes his work as 'scenario-based'; positioned in 'the gap between presentation and narration', it might also be called archival. See Gillick, *The Woodway* (London: Whitechapel, 2002).
- 8 Jacques Derrida uses the first pair of terms to describe opposed drives at work in the concept of the archive in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), and Jeff Wall uses the second pair to describe imperatives at work in the history of the avant-garde, in *Jeff Wall* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996). How does the archival impulse relate to 'archive fever'? Perhaps, like the Library of Alexandria, any archive is founded on disaster (or its threat), pledged against a ruin that it cannot forestall. Yet for Derrida archive fever is more profound, bound up with repetition-compulsion and a death drive. And sometimes this paradoxical energy of destruction can also be sensed in the work at issue here.
- 9 Dean discusses 'collection' in *Tacita Dean* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2001), and 'bad combination' is the title of a 1995 work by Durant. The classic text on 'the rhizome' is, of course, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), where they underscore its 'principles of connection and heterogeneity': 'Any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order' (page 7).
- 10 Thomas Hirschhorn, 'Interview with Okwui Enwezor', in James Rondeau and Suzanne Ghez, eds, *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake*, (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2000) 32. Again, many other artists could be considered here as well, and the archival is only one aspect of the work that I discuss.
- 11 [footnote 56 in source] This will is active in my text too [referring to discussion of the three artists, excluded from extract above]. In the test cases here it varies in subject and strategy: Hirschhorn and Durant stress crossings of avant-garde and kitsch, for example, while Dean tends to figures who fall outside these realms; the connections in Hirschhorn and Durant are tendentious, in Dean tentative; and so on.
- 12 [57] See note 1.
- 13 [58] This work does invite psychoanalytical projections. It can also appear manic – not unlike much archival fiction today (e.g., David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers) – as well as childish. Sometimes Hirschhorn and Durant evoke the figure of the adolescent as 'dysfunctional adult' (I borrow the term from Mike Kelley), who, maimed by capitalist culture, strikes out against it. They entertain infantile gestures too: with its nonhierarchical spatiality installation art often suggests a scatological universe, and sometimes they thematize it as such. For Freud the anal

stage is one of symbolic slippage in which creative definitions and entropic indifferences struggle with one another. So it is sometimes in this art as well.

- 14 [59] Here 'anomie', which stems from the Greek *anomia*, 'without law', is again apposite as a condition to react against. In *A Short Guide into the Work of Thomas Hirschhorn* (New York: Barbara Gladstone Gallery, 2002), Bice Curiger speaks of 'an insane effort to put everything right' in Hirschhorn, who has indeed adopted a mad persona. ('Cavemanman' in a 2002 show at Barbara Gladstone Gallery). On paranoia vis-à-vis the symbolic order, see Eric Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2004).
- 15 [60] Two further speculations: 1. Even as archival art cannot be separated from 'the memory industry' that pervades contemporary culture (state funerals, memorials, monuments ...), it suggests that this industry is amnesiac in its own way, and so calls out for a practice of counter-memory. 2. Archival art might also be bound up, ambiguously, even deconstructively, with an 'archive reason' at large, that is, with a 'society of control' in which our past actions are archived (medical records, border crossings, political involvement ...) so that our present activities can be surveilled and our future behaviours predicted. This networked world does appear both disconnected and connected – a paradoxical appearance that archival art sometimes seems to mimic (Hirschhorn displays can resemble mock World Wide Webs of information), which might also bear on its paranoia vis-à-vis an order that seems both incoherent and systematic in its power. For different accounts of different stages of such 'archive reason', see Allan Sekula, 'The Body as Archive', *October*, 39 (Winter 1986), and Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 59 (Winter 1992).
- 16 [61] Hirschhorn in Obrist, *Interviews*, 394. Or, worse, a culture (to focus on the United States after 9/11) that tropes trauma as the grounds – the Ground Zero, as it were – for so much imperial triumphalism.

Hal Foster 'An Archival Impulse' [the full text includes specific discussion of works by Thomas Hirschhorn, Tacita Dean and Sam Durant], *October*, no. 110 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, Fall 2004) 3–6; 21–2.

## Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska From Enthusiasm to Creative Commons. Interview with Anthony Spira//2005

*Anthony Spira* This publication, titled *Enthusiasm*, is the second volume produced in relation to your project with Polish amateur films from the Socialist era. Volume one accompanied the project's first manifestation in Warsaw and was called *Enthusiasts*. Why did the title change to accompany the shows in London, Berlin and Barcelona?

*Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska* The first exhibition looked particularly at the social and cultural context of the films and their makers – Enthusiasts. As we rethink and represent the films, the phenomenon of enthusiasm has become an important concept. Enthusiasm is the motivating force that enables all kinds of exchanges. We are using the films to trace a trajectory of enthusiasm, which seems to have been drained from the spaces of art, culture, free time, sport and self-organization, to become thoroughly instrumentalized; enthusiasm has replaced labour as a resource for contemporary capital.

*Spira* So your decision to examine the role of 'enthusiasm' in a contemporary context came through the activity of collecting and archiving forgotten films, films from a pivotal element of recent European history. This follows on from your previous projects, such as *Not Hansard: the common wealth* (2000), where you collected printed material produced by local and national clubs, hobbyists, collectors and associations. And maybe *Free Trade* (2003) too, where you traced the entanglements of art and capital through the Manchester Art Gallery's collection. Could you describe your interest in archives and collections? You have previously said that an archival, documentary impulse in the west is motivated by self-promotion rather than self-preservation; it's a way of writing one's own subjectivity into the historical process.

*Cummings and Lewandowska* We've become interested in working with archives as they seem to have an increasingly powerful grip upon culture and its reproduction. There is an astonishing growth in digital databases of images and information, through data banks and image libraries. [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org), for instance, regularly archives the whole publicly available www. It's a gigantic data hoard that already dwarfs public libraries.

Public collections of art in museums and galleries store most (perhaps up to

80 per cent) of their collection at any one time. And these collections (in Britain at least) can never let go of their accumulated material, they can never de-accession.

Archives, like collections, are built with the property of multiple authors and previous owners. But unlike the collection, an archive designates a territory and not a particular narrative. There is no imperative within the logic of the archive to display or interpret. And therefore the meanings of the things contained are up for grabs; it's a discursive terrain. There's a creative potential for things to be brought to the level of speech, as they are not already authored as someone's (eg a curator's) narrative or property. Interpretations are invited and not already determined, which is maybe why there is a creative space that many artists are responding too.

*Spira* What motivates you to make an exhibition out of an archive?

*Cummings and Lewandowska* In the case of *Enthusiast*, there was no pre-existing archive. It was distributed in people's homes but had no public presence. There has been absolutely no interest from public institutions in the cultural production of the amateur or enthusiast unless it conforms to a notion of folk art or craft. We had to track down former film club members by travelling all over Poland. The films were often stored in their houses and in some cases literally under their beds. We carried a portable 16mm film-viewer, so if we couldn't screen the films we could at least glimpse them there and then. Once we had a sense of the range of material, we realized we would have to try and at least seed the idea of an archive.

It's a long story but we found Lukas Ronduda, curator at the CCA in Warsaw and set about trying to clean, restore and digitalize as much material as we could find money or goodwill for. As the collection of films grew, we thought about an exhibition to start the process of interpretation and narration. In some ways we wanted to return the films to their audience. So we contacted the former state and film broadcasting archives in Poland as it occurred to us that it would be interesting to create an 'official' context into which the enthusiasts' films could be placed. The archives are now charging extraordinary amounts of money for access, and even more for reproduction rights even in 'educational' contexts. Essentially, a large part of the cultural memory of a nation, which the state produced, is now denied to the very people who financed it. Similar archives exist throughout Britain too, like the North West Film Archive ([www.nwfa.mmu.ac.uk](http://www.nwfa.mmu.ac.uk)) or internationally the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAPF) a collaborative association of the world's leading film archives ([www.fiafnet.org.uk](http://www.fiafnet.org.uk)). It's like charging for access to museums and libraries.

So we began to think about creating a 'critical' archive of amateur film, which in contrast to the former state archives, would – to use a term from software development – be 'free' or 'open source'. This means that donated films will be digitalized and made available online, not only to view, but to be used as a material resource for future filmmakers. We have been working with Alek Tarkowski, Justyna Hofmokl, Lukasz Ronduda and the filmmakers to enable the films to be licensed under versions of the Creative Commons licenses ([www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org)). The licenses are currently being translated, negotiations are underway and the beginnings of the Enthusiast Archive will be online soon. The Archive Lounge in the exhibition enables visitors to curate their own film programmes. We hope it allows our selection of films under Love, Longing and Labour to be seen as partial, as one possible narrative strand amongst others, and not in any way authorial or definitive.

We recently heard that the BBC are working on making much of their educational programmes available online. Thousands of hours of material will also be placed under the Creative Commons licenses as the Creative Archive.

*Spira* Your own website opens with the following words: 'We recognize that it's no longer helpful to pretend that artists originate the products they make, or more importantly, have control over the values and meanings attributed to their practice: interpretation has superseded intention.' This explicitly explains your choice not to make objects but to treat the world as freely available ready-made material. This attitude is a feature employed by many artists today, even if less explicitly than you, just like a musician sampling and mixing existing tracks.

Could this equally be considered as a curatorial strategy? Perhaps the distinction between your practice and a curatorial one is the degree of intervention with the material that you use. Can you as 'artists' take more liberties with the material than a curator? In a sense, the context, environment, discussions, publicity – the whole system and presentation – becomes as important, if not more important, than the material displayed.

*Cummings and Lewandowska* I think this is getting close to what we've talked about before as a feeling of responsibility or ownership of material for exhibition, interpretation or display; what you refer to as liberties. I guess for us there are only liberties. We are conscious that when you work with a 'curator' – and of course this is a generalization – there is a pressure to act responsibly towards the artwork and the imagined intention of the maker or artist. There is an inbuilt deference. And I guess we feel little of that deference. Partly because much of the material we use already exists outside of the museum or art gallery in a wider 'material culture', it becomes art momentarily through our

intervention, but can also dissolve back again into the realms of the 'everyday'. And partly because we have been working with the technologies that enable objects and experiences to become artworks – museums and galleries, making exhibitions, producing publications and catalogues, writing wall and text-labels, and so on. When you work with these technologies you become aware that they can be turned upon any object, image, artist, maker, experience, city, country or nation. These important and powerful technologies are the means of interpretation, of producing the work of the work of art. This is where our recent work has resided, in taking liberties with the endless process of interpretation.

Once you turn attention away from the manufacture of artworks, to the technologies and institutions that designate the object as an artwork, then it's right to say that the whole world opens up as a readymade. And with this in mind, the practice of artists – all artists, whether they acknowledge this or not – changes from that of struggling to originate, to struggling to choose. We choose from all the ideas, knowledge, objects, films and images that already exist; so the figure of the DJ sampling, or the curator, or the hacker, become much more appropriate metaphors.

In fact they are more than metaphors, they're specifically chosen practices. Because if the idea of a readymade is still vital, it's in Duchamp's gesture, a gesture which didn't create a new object, but a new potential. He precisely exposed the conditions that enable the work of a work of art. He acted curatorially you might say.

*Spira* If all the codes of culture are freely available as materials and tools, is it possible to distinguish between appropriation and exploitation?

*Cummings and Lewandowska* There is a very, very fine line between appropriation and exploitation. And while we talked earlier about feeling little or no deference towards the art object, we take enormous care of social relationships when working with the cultural products of others. This often involves endless negotiation, explanation and collaboration so that everyone involved can see how the project develops and what our aspirations are, and they can decide whether to contribute (or not). Any responsibility resides in these personal exchanges between us and the people we are working with. Clearly, as artists – and again we'd suggest all artists do the same whether it's acknowledged or not – we are able to capitalize on the creativity of others. The difference is that we acknowledge, make explicit and negotiate the terms under which it happens. We inevitably exploit, but would like to avoid exploitation.

*Spira* If people don't 'own' what they produce, is the idea of labour redundant?

*Cummings and Lewandowska* Very few people own what they produce. This used to be the privileged position held open for the idea of artists, those who were not alienated from the fruits of their labour. But this is clearly no longer the case. The ideal artist has become a model employee in deregulated economies reliant on self-motivation, enthusiasm, creativity, flexibility and intuition. Labour, far from being redundant, has merely changed its nature.

*Spira* What I meant to get at was that people are remunerated for their time (and effort). If the fruit of our time and effort becomes freely available, it loses any financial incentive. How are people supposed to earn a living if what they produce is not remunerated? Does intellectual property not have a similar value to physical property?

*Cummings and Lewandowska* Financial incentives are not necessarily what drives enthusiasm. And maybe this is something of a contradiction, but the fact that something is freely available does not necessarily mean that there are no financial incentives to produce it. There is an enormous cultural shift underway as we move – in Europe at least – to financial economies of immaterial labour; from the production of goods to the production of services, knowledge and information – like education, or creating exhibitions, or consultation.

As for intellectual property, this seems one of the most keenly contested areas of cultural struggle at the moment across a range of otherwise disparate disciplines. And the simple answer is no. Unlike physical property where my 'use' of that good deprives others, or at least depletes the common pool of available resources – animal grazing rights is the example usually given. With ideas and knowledge this model is radically inverted. My 'use' of an idea does not necessarily stop other people using the idea. And it goes further: instead of 'use' depleting available resources, the more people using an idea the better it becomes. Sharing ideas and knowledge enriches; restricting their use does not. [...]

Neil Cummings, Marysia Lewandowska, extract, 'From Enthusiasm to Creative Commons', e-mail exchange with Anthony Spira, *Enthusiasm: Films of Love Longing and Labour* (London: Whitechapel Gallery/Berlin: Kunst Werke/Barcelona: Tàpies Foundation, 1 April 2005–15 January 2006. This text is licensed under Creative Commons: Attribution NonCommercial ShareAlike. <http://www.creativecommons.org>

THE PHOTOCOPY OF THE  
PHOTOGRAPH, AN INVENTION  
THAT AUTOMATICALLY  
CHARS  
PERFORATES  
PALES  
IODIZES  
DRAINS  
CONGESTS  
WEAKENS  
DEHYDRATES  
SHRIVELS  
SHRINKS  
STIFLES  
RUSTS  
BURNS  
SALINIZES  
POLLUTES  
TARS  
FRAYS  
AND  
ERODES  
THE SKIN  
OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC BODY,  
PRESERVING IT IN DESTRUCTION.

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## Eugenio Dittborn

### A Triptych (abc)//1976-80

#### a. The Running Omelet

1. The author owes his drawings to observation of the vicissitudes of the human body in its relations, necessarily broken and fitful, with another human body or bodies.
2. He owes his drawings to his models, stray photographs in Chilean magazines that have succumbed to history; he owes his drawings to them because these photographs are fissures, intrusions.
3. The author owes his drawings to the photogenic dispersal of the human body at rest, he owes his drawings to the theatrical concentration of the human body in movement.
4. The author owes his drawings to the straining of human bodies as they traverse great expanses; he owes his drawings to these bodies in the throes of violent physical exercise: these bodies issuing into photographs and abiding there, fixed, because question marks are fixed.
5. The author owes his drawings to observation of the human face in the course of rigorously regimented group occasions: luncheons, athletic performances, weekends at the beach, boxing events, weddings, underwater fishing championships, condolence calls, anniversaries, dance competitions, singing festivals; he owes his drawings to these rituals as shown on television, fables and in published photographs.
6. He owes his drawings to the ephemeral plurality of the casts of the human face, to the definitive singularity of these casts; he owes his drawings to the seeming transparency, the seeming opacity of these casts.
7. He owes his drawings to the employment of adversity, topographical surveys, didactic illustrations, contour maps and inventories, in such a way that when these meet they come into conflict with one another and are dislocated.
8. He owes his drawings to the writings of Cookieface, who was driven by the

incompetent and culinary nature of certain representations of reality to evoke with nostalgia the logic of multiplication tables.

9. The author owes his drawings to the complementary and contradictory relationship established by the vertical and the horizontal when they meet, engendering the most fraught and fertile situation in the whole of graphic language: perpendicularity and its only begotten son, the dot.

10. The author owes his drawings to famous and misunderstood draftsmen, he owes his drawings to unknown and understood draftsmen; he owes his drawings to all the drawings of all the draftsmen of all times.

#### b. Track End

1. The painter owes his works to the human face, unique and generic in its somatic constitution, hunting ground of the photogenic, asymmetric in its hereditary configuration, apt for dismantling and reassembly in the production of dreams.
2. And he owes his works to the dyslexic schematism, stereotyped melancholy, intractable application, documented assembly and lunatic delicacy of the Photorobot and Identikit picture.
3. The painter owes his works to the human body deported in a photogenic state to the collective space of the magazine, the formalization of its perpetual abandonment.
4. And he owes his works to the suffering of countenances printed in *El Detective* magazine, a criminology and scientific policing publication; he owes his works to the obscene exhaustion of faces and bodies photographed for the common grave that is *Vea* magazine; he owes his works to the unending fatigues of bodies and faces published in the dirt track that is *Estadio* magazine.
5. The painter owes his works to the multiplication of unfinished movements by the human body in a sporting state of body, dislocated by the uniformly rapid displacement of its unmoving parts, guided and unceasing and mislaid and passing from end to end, side to side of pitches, rings, pools, tracks, in a no-time, instantly perpetuated in the brutality of its public suffering.
6. The painter owes his works to the prolonged observation in photographs of

bodies configured by the clash and fusion there of lights, shadows, half-tones, mutually permeated and exacerbated, a flow that razes as it irrigates, a circulatory apparatus of rigorously monochrome chiaroscuro.

7. And he owes his works to the body of the photograph, embalmed in and by the photocopy, repository of photographic remains; he owes his works to the invention of the photocopy of the photograph, an invention that automatically chars, perforates, pales, iodizes, drains, congests, weakens, dehydrates, shrivels, shrinks, stifles, rusts, burns, salinizes, pollutes, tars, frays and erodes the skin of the photographic body, preserving it in destruction.

8. And the painter owes his works to the collation of photographs with photocopies of these photographs; from this collation arose the outlook which guided the selection, reading and translation of his models, invariably photographic in kind.

### c. Toolbox

1. I owe my work to the acquisition of superannuated magazines, outmoded profane relics into whose photographs drifted the lapses of public life, breaches through which the unfinished present leaks.

2. I owe my work to mass sporting events in which men face one another bodily in a purposeful struggle for victory, a stubbornness that holds them under rigorous control; I owe my work to the photographic gesticulation of these men, printed and published in newspapers and magazines: frozen impulses, strokes of fortune, snap falls, fossil finishes.

3. I owe my work to grey cardboard, a medium for wadding, covering, insulating, filling, wrapping, dividing, absorbing and blocking; my work to the daily use of grey cardboard in binding workshops, packing warehouses, port customs houses, architects' offices, printing works, railway terminals, advertising agencies, tailoring and dressmaking workshops, factories that make portfolios, insoles, reels, cases, files and notebooks; my work to grey cardboard, unfinished paper, tinder, peel, second-hand bed.

4. I owe my work to the observation of liquid secretions from the human body deposited as spills on fabrics, stains that disrupt, interfere, disarray, dishevel, interrupt and tinge, stains that stain.

5. I owe my work to watery substances, oily substances, spilt on absorbent, woven, dry, opaque canvases, unbleached linen, jute, sail canvas; I owe my work to the uniformly retarded movement of the aforementioned substances once they have penetrated the aforesaid tissues.

6. I owe my work to the preponderance given to systematic arrangements, subdivisions, didactic illustrations, collections, lists, rolls of honour, paradigms all.

7. I owe my work to the use of proverbs, definitions, adages, anthologies, set phrases, litanies, riddles, verses, conundrums, all texts found ready-made in speech and writing which like public photography are common coin, dead stars in movement, commonplaces.

8. I owe my work to the connection and propensity for scenic conjunction between written commonplaces and photographic commonplaces, a connection that by shaking shifts and by breaking taints the over-currency in the commonness of these places.

Eugenio Dittborn, 'The Running Omelet', *Onchileanpainting, history* (Santiago de Chile: Galería Época, 1976); 'Track End', *Final de Pista* (Santiago de Chile: Galería Época, 1977), solo exhibition catalogues; 'Toolbox', in Ronald Kay, *del Espacio de Acá* (Santiago de Chile: Galería Sur, 1980), book accompanying exhibitions by Dittborn and Carlos Leppe.

**Charles Merewether**  
**Archives of the Fallen//1997**

The historian Pierre Nora has written that 'modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image.' Photography is critical to the practice and authority of the archive, in so far as it folds together history as representation and representation as history. Transferring the world to image, photography as a representational structure produces a certain archival effect. And, like photography, the archive gains its authority to represent the past through an apparent neutrality, whereby difference is either erased or regulated. Both the archive and photography reproduce the world as witness to itself, a testimony to the real, historical evidence.

Eugenio Dittborn of Chile, Rosângela Rennó of Brazil, and Milagros de la Torre of Peru have all worked with the concept of the archive. Through their work, they seek to rezone the cartography of memory and to restore a past that has been erased from the historical record. While Dittborn's work dates from the 1970s through the period of Pinochet's dictatorship, the work of both Rennó and de la Torre began in the murky wake of a period of state and civil violence. They use photography precisely to destabilize its authority as a technology of remembrance, a technology that participates in constructing seamless narratives of identity. Each of these artists works with the notion of the unsanctioned or unlawful body of the nation as a way to address the violence that characterizes the inscription of history. They use photographs that represent the moments before which the body becomes absent. In so doing, they question how and what it is that photography remembers and forgets, for whom and for what purpose.

Since the late 1970s, Dittborn's project has been to return to circulation the marginalized and erased figures of Chilean history. His work points to the archive as a container that preserves but, at the same time, buries the subject. In his extensive series of *Airmail Paintings*, Dittborn has brought together anthropologist Martin Gusinde's 1920 photographs of indigenous peoples of the Tierra del Fuego, who, after a long history of extermination, were on the point of disappearance; ID photographs of petty thieves and prostitutes taken from police files and published in cheap detective magazines of the 1940s and 1950s; identikit pictures; images of archaeological remains; and drawings of faces made by Dittborn's younger daughter. This work of exhumation recovers the

body of Chilean memory and history and places it back into circulation. Folded and transported to new points of destination, the unfolding of these figures makes them visible and combats the oblivion to which they had been consigned.

As it exposes us to those whom the government had defined as transgressive, criminal, or primitive, this work fractures the seamless and monumental history of the nation. It becomes an allegory of life under the dictatorship of Pinochet, a regime that committed violence against its people in the name of the nation and national identity.

In her series *Immemorial* (1994), Rosângela Rennó showed an installation of fifty photographs that yield dark portraits of the workers and children who built Brasilia, the capital whose architectural design was championed for its utopian vision. In a warehouse of the Public Archive of the Federal District, Rennó found suitcases of more than 15,000 files concerning the employees of the government construction company Novacap. In *Immemorial*, she used stories that told of a massacre in the workers' barracks and of dozens of workers who had died in the building of Brasilia and been buried in the foundations. In the archives, these workers were classified under the heading 'dismissed due to death'.

An example of Walter Benjamin's warning that not even the dead are safe when only the victors tell the story, Rennó's work engages in a struggle over the ownership of memory. The experience of seeing is itself subject to the forces of forgetting, and the labour of reading traces is equivalent to coming to terms with the past. Traces of identity are captured in the moment prior to the subjects' disappearance, a recognition of difference brought out of the shadows of a suppressed history. The installation represents a redemptive gesture, a resurrection of fallen bodies, those sacrificed in the building of the future.

In 1996, Milagros de la Torre produced a series of fifteen photographs of objects taken in the archive of *cuerpos del delitos* at the Palace of Justice in Lima. The title of the series, *The Lost Steps*, refers to the name given to a hallway in the Palacio de Justicia through which detainees pass on their way to receiving their condemnation. Under the guidance of long-term archivist Manuel Guzman, de la Torre was led through the mountains of files, boxes, and evidence hidden away in the recesses of the Palace. The objects she photographed are the evidence of crimes committed, the remaining traces of tragic stories of passions, beliefs and illusions gone awry.

There is no bright light of revolution given to these objects. Rather, they are seen in an obscure or uncertain light. Death haunts the photographs. They are witness to what is absent from the scene. The strange illumination de la Torre gives to her photographs – as if they are lit by the darkness that has befallen



them – represents the objects' entombment in the archives and a memory that, swiftly buried, lies deep within the shadows of history. One may propose that the effect of de la Torre's work in the archive today functions in part allegorically. It suggests something that has passed, but which, by being brought back into the present as the image of a ruinous history, becomes emblematic of the fate of things to come.

In the wake of a long period of violence and unrest, the concepts of identity, freedom and justice, as defined by government, have become a guide to measuring the possibility of democracy. Their artistic expression represents an intervention in the archives of a nation. As these images bring identities into the light and expose us to the stories they embody, they are mute witness to the fate of the individuals who, by entering the public record, have been written out of history. At a time when histories of identity and nation are being rewritten, these images are a timely reminder of the instrumental power of state institutions to control, if not determine, the lives of its populace. The photographs become a memorial, a site where memory and forgetfulness can face each other.

Charles Merewether, 'Archives of the Fallen', *Grand Street*, No. 62 (1997) 36–47.

**Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**

**The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives (Introduction)//1985/1999**

[ ... ] One of the major difficulties with consolidating a figure from the British nineteenth century in India as an object of knowledge is that, over the last decade and a half, British India has been painstakingly constructed as a cultural commodity with a dubious fiction. The deepening of the International Division of Labour as a result of the new micro-electronic capitalism, the proliferation of worldwide neocolonial aggression, the possibility of nuclear holocaust, and now the exigencies of globalization encroach upon the constitution of the everyday life of the Anglo-United States. The era of *Pax Britannica*, caught in a super-realistic lyrical grandeur on television, film and paperback, provides that audience at the same time with a justification of imperialism dissimulated under the lineaments of a manageable and benevolent self-criticism. It is in history and so-called archivist postcolonial criticism that this is, alas, most evident.

The contemptuous spuriousness of the project can be glimpsed on the most superficial level, if we contrast it, for example, to that of the US 'nostalgia film', which Fredric Jameson has described as a 'well-nigh libidinal historicism'. Jameson finds 'the 1950s' to be 'the privileged lost object of desire ... for Americans', at least partly because they signify 'the stability and prosperity of a *pax Americana*'. Speaking of 'the insensible colonization of the present by the nostalgia mode' in a film such as *Body Heat*, Jameson observes: 'the setting has been strategically framed, with great ingenuity, to eschew most of the signals that normally convey the contemporaneity of the United States in its multi-national era ... as though [the narrative] were set in some eternal thirties, beyond real historical time.'<sup>1</sup> No such ingenuity is needed in the case of the spurious simulacrum of imperial India or colonial Africa. The rural landscape of *Gandhi* or *Out of Africa*, comfortably masquerading as the backdrop of the Raj or colony, is in fact the un-retouched landscape of rural India or Africa today. The different resonance of *Home and the World* in India and in Northwest Europe is a case in point.

It is against these disciplinary and cultural tendencies of representation that I proposed, in the mid-eighties, a 'reading' of a handful of archival material, bits of 'the unprocessed *historical record*'.<sup>2</sup> At that stage, the point was to reconcile such a reading with the fact that, within the discipline of history, influential figures like Dominick LaCapra and Hayden White were questioning a privileging of the archives:

That language ... is the *instrument of mediation* between the consciousness and

the world that consciousness inhabits [White writes with some derision] ... will not be news to literary theorists, but it has not yet reached the historians buried in the archives hoping, by what they call a 'sifting of the facts' or 'the manipulation of the data', to find the form of the reality that will serve as the object of representation in the account that they will write 'when all the facts are known' and they have finally 'got the story straight'.<sup>3</sup>

In that a hegemonic nineteenth-century European historiography has designated the archives as a repository of 'facts', and I proposed that they should be 'read', my position could be consonant with White's. The records I read showed the soldiers and administrators of the East India Company constructing the object of representations that becomes the reality of India. This is 'literature' in the general sense – the archives selectively preserving the changeover of the episteme – as its condition; with 'literature' in the narrow sense – all the genres – as its effect. The distinction – between archive and literature – blurs a bit later. To grasp the distinction, the literary critic must turn to the archives. On a somewhat precious register of literary theory, it is possible to say that this was the construction of a fiction whose task was to produce a whole collection of 'effects of the real', and that the 'misreading' of this 'fiction' produced the proper name of 'India'. The colonizer constructs himself as he constructs the colony. The relationship is intimate, an open secret that cannot be part of official knowledge.

As a disciplinary literary critic, I was thus sceptical of White's privileging of literary criticism. To reveal the irreducibly tropological nature of historical work no doubt redresses the balance in the discipline of history. Such a suggestion would carry weight, however, if it were made from a perspective equally knowledgeable about the specificity of the study of history *and* the study of literature as institutionalized disciplines. Alongside the careful (narrative) history of history, historiography, and philosophy of history *within the disciplinarization* of history in 'The Absurdist Moment in Contemporary Literary Theory', White presented a loose-knit taxonomy of the development of recent literary criticism, quite outside of the history of its institutionalization. He seemed to take at face value the American New Critics, whose ideological effigy still rules our discipline. This allowed him to arrive at a point where he could speak of the 'moral' and the 'aesthetic' as if they were a matter of mere preference as to choice of ground.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps because he profited from White's path-breaking work and a more benign exposure to Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, Dominick LaCapra's position seems at once bolder and more tempered. He too 'urges the intellectual historian to learn of developments in ... literary criticism and philosophy'. But he is also aware that

at present, more experimental forms of literary criticism, when they do not replace older types of formal or 'new' criticism, threaten to remain on the level of delicate miniatures ... 'History' itself may be invoked as an extremely abstract, indeed intemporal, category either to defend or to reproach more formal and micrological methods of criticism. Or the 'contexts' that are called upon to flesh out an interpretation may be the outgrowth of wild speculation rather than careful research.<sup>5</sup>

Yet LaCapra also cautions against enthusiastic and uncritical 'archivism', its

Indiscriminate mystique ... which is bound up with hegemonic pretensions ... The archive as fetish is a literal substitute for the 'reality' of the past which is 'always already' lost for the historian. When it is fetishized, the archive is more than the repository of traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself – an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing of other inscriptions.<sup>6</sup>

I find these admonitions just, although I remain troubled about the ontological status of a 'past' in a wildly speculative way. LaCapra produces them, however, in defence of the (Western) historian's consideration of 'great works'. But, as I have suggested in the previous chapter [*cf.* Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 1999], at a time of an epistemic makeover and the establishment of an intimate relationship between the 'literary' and the 'colonial', the reading of literature can directly supplement the writing of history with suspicious ease.<sup>7</sup> In Chapter 2 [*op. cit.*], I have suggested that great works of literature cannot easily flourish in the fracture or discontinuity which is covered over by an alien legal system masquerading as law as such, an alien ideology established as the only truth, and a set of human sciences busy establishing the 'native' as self-consolidating Other ('epistemic violence'). For the early part of the nineteenth century in India, the literary critic must turn to the archives of imperial governance to supplement the consolidation of what will come to be recognized as 'nationalist' literature. Again, the introduction of the thematics of imperialism alters the radical arguments. 'Often the dimensions of the document that make it a text of a certain sort with its own historicity and its relations to sociopolitical processes (for example, relations of power)', LaCapra writes, 'are filtered out when it is used purely and simply as a quarry for facts in the reconstruction of the past'.<sup>8</sup> Even so modest a consideration of the construction of the object of imperialism as the present essay cannot be guilty of that error.

Perhaps my intent is to displace (not transcend) the mere reversal of the

literary and the archival implicit in much of LaCapra's work. To me, literature and the archives seem complicit in that they are both a cross-hatching of condensations, a traffic in telescoped symbols, that can only too easily be read as each other's repetition-with-a-displacement. The authority of the author is there matched by the control of the *archon*, the official custodian of truth.<sup>9</sup> It is archivization that interests us, naturally.

In a slightly different context, rethinking intellectual history, LaCapra proposes that the 'relation between practices in the past and historical accounts of them' is 'transferential'; and adds, 'I use "transference" in the modified psychoanalytic sense of a repetition-displacement of the past into the present as it necessarily beats on the future.'

The transference-situation in analysis is one where the tug-of-war of desire is at work on both sides – on the part of both the analysand and the analyst. Both come to occupy the subject-position in the uneven progressive-regressive exchange. The task of the 'construction' of a 'history' develops on both. To wish to replicate this in disciplinary historiography might simply mark the site of a radical version of the academic intellectual's desire for power. This desire can be located in the slippage between the suggestion that the relation between past practices and historical accounts is transferential, and, as LaCapra goes on to say in four paragraphs – the suggestion that, however difficult it might be – 'a transferential relation' must be 'negotiate[d] critically'.<sup>10</sup> In the first position, the historian uneasily occupies the couch. In the second, the logic of the analogy would make the historian share the responsibility of the analyst. The distance covered by the slippage between these two positions is precisely the metaphor of the 'cure'. Although I am generally sympathetic with LaCapra's use of the transference-model in disciplinary critique and the critique of the *mentalité*-school of historiography, I cannot overlook the fact that to dissimulate the space of the 'cure' disqualifies any methodological analogy taken from transference. I have argued elsewhere, writing directly on psychoanalytic *literary* criticism, that this disqualification is perhaps irreducible.<sup>11</sup> Chapter 1 [*op. cit.*] considers Deleuze and Guattari's more serious criticism of psychoanalysis itself as the production of a general equivalent that manages the crisis of capitalism. The psychoanalytic metaphor for transformative disciplinary practice in the human sciences will always remain a neurosis and remembrance outside of clinical practice: not to mention the fact that, at least by Freud's account, transference-neuroses are the source of science.<sup>12</sup>

LaCapra is too sophisticated a thinker not to suspect this. In the place of this catachresis he offers us a 'fiction': 'It is a useful critical fiction to believe that the texts of phenomena to be interpreted may answer one back and even be convincing enough to lead one to change one's mind.'<sup>13</sup> If the 'past' is an *absolute*

'other', this 'useful fiction' might track the mechanics of the construction of the *self-consolidating* other – a history that is in some sense a genealogy of the historian. What is marked is the site of a desire. I need not belabour the point.

[*the body of the text is the account of the retrieval of the life and death details of the Rani of Sirmur in the early nineteenth century, in order to capture her use by the British to gain control of the state of Sirmur in the remote western Himalayas*]

I should have liked to establish a transferential relationship with the Rani of Sirmur. I pray instead to be haunted by her slight ghost, bypassing the arrogance of the cure. There is not much text in her name in the archives. And of course there is no pretense of continuity of cultural inscription between her soul and the mental theatre of the archivists. To establish something like a simulacrum of continuity is that 'epistemic violation' that I invoked in my more turgid phase. It started in the Rani's son's generation. She was only the instrumental agent of the settlement.

To be haunted is also to lay to rest any hope of 'detecting the traces of [an] uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of [a] fundamental history, [in which] the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity', which was Fredric Jameson's project some years ago.<sup>14</sup> If for us the assurance of transference gives way to the possibility of haunting, it is also true that for us the only figure of the unconscious is that of a radical series of discontinuous interruptions. In a mere miming of that figure, one might say that the epistemic story of imperialism is the story of a series of interruptions, a repeated tearing of time that cannot be sutured. As I have urged in the previous chapter [*op. cit.*], today's cultural studies should think at least twice before acting on a wish to achieve that impossible seam, endorsing Sartre's imperial conviction: 'There is always some way of understanding an idiot, a child, a primitive man or a foreigner *if one has sufficient information.*'

But if in today's world, one ventures into the arena of exploitation, in globalization the Masters and Mistresses try as little to neutralize epistemic discontinuity with the woman or girl of the rank and file as did the Company's functionaries with the Rani. And, although references to (post)colonialism have become more frequent than when these chapters were first written, the story of reference remains unchanged – the willed (auto)biography of the West still masquerades as disinterested history, even when the critic presumes to touch its unconscious.<sup>15</sup>

Haunting for transference, the unconscious as interruption. I must confess that I have not been able to stop tinkering with bits of Freudian terminology. As far as I am able to understand my own practice, I do so in order to borrow a seductive and risky interpretive vocabulary and a powerful metaphoric, not to

construct a collective socio-political Subject, nor yet to find an analogy for reading in the analytic situation. More about this later. The field of Third World criticism has become so quickly fraught that I must repeat another version of the methodological caution that I advanced in my reading of Hegel's reference to the *Gitā*: In the United States the Third Worldism currently afloat in humanistic disciplines is often openly ethnicist or primitivist. In reading that bit of Hegel I was entering that role to offer a subversive message. There is no such clear subversion here. I was born in India and received my primary, secondary and tertiary education there, including two years of graduate work. My Indian example could thus be seen as a nostalgic investigation of the lost roots of my own identity. Yet even as I know that one cannot freely enter the thickets of 'motivations', I would maintain that my chief project is to be wary of such nostalgia entertained by academics in self-imposed exile of Eurocentric economic migration; for I feel it myself. I turn to Indian material because, in the absence of advanced disciplinary training, that accident of birth and education has provided me with a *sense* of the historical canvas, a hold on some of the pertinent languages that are useful tools for a *bricoleur* – especially when she is armed with the Marxist scepticism of 'concrete experience' as the final arbiter, and with a critique of disciplinary formations. The Indian case cannot be taken as representative of all countries, nations, cultures and the like that may be invoked as the Other of Europe as Self. This caution seems all the more necessary because, at the other end, studies of the English, French and German eighteenth century are still repeatedly adduced as *representative* of the emergence of the ethical consensus – and studies of Emerson, Thoreau and Henry Adams advanced as a study of the *American* mind. I use Mahasweta because I am bilingual in Bengali and English and she is literally a postcolonial case. [ ... ]

- 1 [footnote 10 in source] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1991) 20–21.
- 2 [11] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) 5.
- 3 [12] White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 125–6.
- 4 [13] White, *Metahistory*, xi–xii.
- 5 [14] Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual Criticism: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 344.
- 6 [15] LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 92, n. 17.
- 7 [16] This ease is reflected in Benedict Anderson's conjuring with the novel in the production of an influential theory of nationalism in *Imagined Communities*. For the makeover of the term 'literature' in the Bengali case, see Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Street: Elite and Popular*

*Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1989).

- 8 [17] LaCapra, *Rethinking*, 31.
- 9 [18] Derrida, 'Archive Fever', *Diacritics*, 25 (Summer 1995) 9–63.
- 10 [19] *Ibid.*, 72–3. When it uses the Lacanian explanatory model to understand the law (resolutely lower case), its consequences and its scope, Slavoj Žižek's work remains an exception to the hermeneutic circle described in the text. See especially *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). This may well be related to the fact that, having served and being active in the upper reaches of the government, Žižek is 'responsible' within the political calculus in ways that few academic cultural critics can be. If Freud set the tone for institutionalizing the reading of narrative as ethical instantiation, Žižek's use of Lacan offers readings of narrative as political instantiation, minimizing the usual problem of reading plot summary as unmediated representation of the psychoanalytic morphology.
- 11 [20] Spivak, 'The Letter as Cutting Edge', in *In Other Worlds*, 3–14. See also Spivak, 'Woman in Difference', *Outside*, 77–95. Ronald Inden has an interesting idea of the material of history as 'dream' in *Imagining India* (London: Blackwell, 1990) 55–56, 40–41; Inden does not suggest, of course, that the critic can work a transference here. For a surreal counterfactual dream account, see Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay, 'Swapnalabha Bharatbarsher Itihash', in *Bhudeh Rachana Sambhar*, ed. Pramathanath Bisi (Calcutta: Mitra and Ghosh, 1969) 341–74.
- 12 [21] Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', *SE*, 18; 50–51. I am of course not taking into account the viability of psychoanalysis as cure.
- 13 [22] LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 73.
- 14 [23] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) 20.
- 15 [24] White has his version of an uninterrupted narrative whose fundamental history must be restored: it is the history of consciousness itself, 'the deep [tropologically progressivist] structure of the historical imagination', 'the single tradition of historical thinking' (*Metahistory*, ix–x). All proceeds here as if the sign 'consciousness' has no history, no geopolitical specificity. In order to put together his theory of the 'political unconscious' as the vast container of the uninterrupted narrative of fundamental history, Fredric Jameson also taps psychoanalysis. He constructs an adequate analogy between the Lacanian subject-model/discursive-orders of the Imaginary, symbolic and Real on one hand, and the functioning of text and history on the other. It is Dominick LaCapra who has, in my view, successfully analyzed this problematic manoeuvre, suggesting that this is to misappropriate Lacan in rather a serious way (*Rethinking*, 245–51).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, excerpt from introduction, 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives' [of which this is only a fragment of the text], first published in *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1985); incorporated, in this revised version, in Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999) 198–244.

The First Information Report (FIR) is a written document prepared by the police in India when they receive information about the commission of a cognizable offence. Looking at FIRs is an exercise in the observation of the intersection and interlacing of many kinds of narrative strategies and claims to truth. When speaking of the FIR, one has to ask – who brings it into the domain of discourse, what methods are used to present it, and to what end is it sought to be presented? It is common knowledge that the FIR can become an instrument used to shape 'convenient truths' on behalf of those who wield power. The FIR cantilevers 'truths' – the different truth claims of different parties, their different credibilities often an index of their material and enunciative capacity – and a 'juridical truth' together into a relationship that enables the precise application of legal force intended at achieving a specific aim that fulfills the objectives of power. Sometimes this is done by framing false charges (fictional facticity) against a person who can then be made a target of police harassment, and on other occasions, the facts stated by a complainant can be deliberately distorted, elided, obscured, so that the charge loses credibility and is disqualified due to inconsistencies in the registration of the FIR. Here the inscription of the FIR is marked not by detail but by a blurred vagueness or a powerful opacity. The particular rhetoric of documentation implicit in the language of a given FIR can be co-related to a specific problem encountered by power. What can be said about an FIR is generally valid for most 'documents'. The normal function of the document is to register and index a stable picture of the world as power wills it to be. The documentary, like history, can be read as the 'prose of counter insurgency', as the record of a permanent military campaign to subdue a recalcitrant world of discomfiting, incongruous and insurgent realities – to produce in turn, images and representations that are well organized, persuasive, and that conform to the approximation of truth from the perspective of power.

That the 'document' enters the art space at a time when the world seems to be grappling with visible crises should come as no surprise. The enhanced 'visibility' of the crises, particularly as a result of the intensification of the extensive presence of media networks, threatens to overwhelm all repositories of significant representations. If one function of art making is to offer a way of making sense of the realities we live in, then it is not as such remarkable that contemporary art practice chooses to engage with the visibility of global crises in our times. The art space cannot keep the troubled world at bay, and in order

to apprehend reality as it is, in all its disarray, it has to permit the entry of the document as a 'stable' referent of the chaotic world it inhabits. What magnifies the presence of the 'document' in the space of representation and discourse is the cognitive and epistemic pressure brought about by a belated recognition of globalization. Not only is reality visibly 'crisis-ridden', but the networked nature of each crisis – the thickly interlaced relationship of one manifestation of crisis to another, across a global space – also seems to magnify the impact of reality. This 'magnified and amplified reality effect' presses in. There is, in other words, no escape possible in art at the moment from what may at first seem to be the mere 'facticity' of the document, which seems to invade contemporary art from other semantic spaces and spheres.

At heart, the dilemma remains one of what can be done with the images, testimonies and quotations of reality that a documentary mode brings in to art (from everywhere). Just as the FIR can be read as a statement by power about the world (and to the world), it is also always vulnerable to counter readings, to being prised open, and connected to other 'documents' or other realities, and to being made to reveal the inner logic of power. The FIR may not have much that is original or remarkable to say, but its evasions, narrative stances and silences may be eloquent and compelling. The challenge of working with documents in an art space (for the artist, the curator, the critic and the viewer) is the possibility of decrypting the aporias in the representations of the real. This is what makes working with documents aesthetically and formally a difficult thing to do, and this is why working with documents in contemporary art spaces can often end up only in the alleviation of representational anxieties (of artists, curators and the public). Because the document's raw material is rhetoric, the practitioner has to constantly evolve a rhetoric of rhetoric to make documents yield. This requires more not less imagination, and a vigilance about the relationship between the externality of a document and the subjectivity implicit in the act of reading it differently from the norm. That's why, just as the recovery of memory and history (of defeats and dispersal, powerlessness and servitude, as much as of survival and creation), and the painstaking reconstruction of an archive of lost and scattered meanings is one of the first cultural tasks on the agenda of the insurgent, a critical engagement with a documentary mode of practice too becomes (for the same reason) one of the key undertakings of the current art practitioner who seeks to express contemporaneity as much as s/he engages with art. The contemporary moment, nothing if not a contest of images that seek to define 'globality', demands documents as counterweights to its own 'documentary' record.

Raqs Media Collective, 'First Information Report', first published in German translation in *Texte zur Kunst*, vol. 51, ed. Karin Gludovatz and Clemens Krummel (September 2003).

**Dragan Kujundzic**

***Archigraphia: On the Future of Testimony  
and the Archive to Come//2002***

**[...] Ashes, Memory and Testimony**

In the concluding chapter of *Archive Fever*, Derrida's book turns on itself and, as it were, begins anew. It should be noted that the book itself is organized by chapters called 'Exergue', 'Preamble', 'Foreword', 'Theses' and 'Postscript'. It demarcates itself against any authentic moment of archivization of itself; it is an impossible archive which only begins, or comes too late, but never is as such. This should be understood as a rhetorical and syntagmatic illustration of the anasemic, heterogeneous and multiple logic at work in Freud's and Derrida's understanding of archivization. There, at the end of the book, which in a sense becomes its beginning, Derrida brings us to Pompeii and Freud's analysis of Jensen's *Gradiva*. It is at this site that the young archaeologist talks to the ghost of a woman, and walks over the imprint left in the ashes by this midday ghost (*Mittagsgespenst*). It is in this moment when the archaeologist reflects on the inscription and the writing directly made on the ashes by the ghost, that the archive of the future and the future of the archive thrust themselves forth and make their impression with utmost urgency.

At the end of *Moses and Monotheism* and at the eve of the Shoah, Freud reminds us that the archiviolence that pertains to Jewish monotheism has the capacity to replicate itself throughout history, and on the body of the people chosen by this archivization. The Jewish people murdered god but did not admit to it. 'Through this they have, so to speak, shouldered a tragic guilt. They have been made to suffer severely for it.'<sup>1</sup> And, a bit earlier, talking about Christianity undergoing a similar resistance by those who are 'badly christened', he says: 'The hatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity, and it is not surprising that in the German Nationalist Socialist revolution this close connection of the two monotheistic religions finds such a clear expression in the hostile treatment of both.'<sup>2</sup> (That Yerushalmi at the end of his book *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* [1991] could still write that Freud – in 1939! – 'could not have anticipated the full horror of the war' and 'the devastation of a third of a Jewish people'<sup>3</sup> testifies to Yerushalmi's lack of understanding of the anticipatory force of psychoanalysis and its most outstanding achievements and insights. If *Moses and Monotheism* has any meaning, it is in its attempt to understand, interpret and against all hope diffuse what Freud saw coming better than anyone. This book also allows us, better than any historical assessment to this day, to reflect on and work through the violent

consequences of this catastrophic event and its devastating archive. Of this one and of so many others.)

Derrida formalizes this line of Freud's thought in his *Archive Fever* by pointing out that if Freud suffered from archive fever, it was precisely because he or his discovery had a capacity to 'partake in the archive fever or disorder we are experiencing today, concerning its lightest symptoms or the great holocaustic tragedies of our modern history and historiography'.<sup>4</sup> And a bit further on, in Derrida's interpretation, psychoanalysis probably produced its most profound insight by allowing us to explain 'why anarchiving destruction belongs to the process of archivization and produces the very thing it reduces, on occasion to ashes, and beyond'.<sup>5</sup>

Freud's insights into the nature of the archive allow us to comprehend something that has happened as the most catastrophic event in Jewish history. Psychoanalysis was always already a thought of that catastrophic event. That event is eminently tied to modernity, which begins with monotheism, the technological capacity of archivization which gave this history its technical reproducibility, and the logic of sacrifice activated by the Nationalist Socialist regime. (Freud's work initiated after the first world war works through the trauma, death, artificial and phantom limbs, the death drive, mass destruction, but also anticipates the ultimate writing on ashes and the archiviolence of the following war). Freud's insights into the nature of the archive belong to the thought of modernity comparable to that of Walter Benjamin. It thinks the possibility of infinite multiplication and technical reproducibility of repression and destruction at work in the modern archive, as in the striking example of the most sophisticated machine of archivization, the computer. As is well-known, the first computer, the IBM-owned Hollerith machine, was first put to use on a grand scale for the systematic archivization of European Jewry in rounding it up for the concentration camps. And Freud understood, perhaps better than anyone, why such an event, while multiplying an archive, could at the same time produce, in an equally infinite capacity, its complete erasure. Leaving only the ashes to speak in the absence of the catastrophic event. The catastrophe that produced them remains, but as ashes, gone up in smoke and forever erased [...]

**Testimony and the Impossibility of Speaking**

In the 1997 documentary film *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann*, there is a scene in which a writer, Yehiel Denur, appears before the judges. He did it reluctantly, and prior to the trial refused to testify for a long time. The prosecutors particularly wanted his testimony, since he was, for them, an especially valuable and reliable witness, having actually seen Eichmann in a concentration camp. He would provide the first hand testimony. Such hopes met with the structural limit

of any 'live', 'first hand' testimony of the genocide. Once on the stand, the witness, who called himself 'katzetnik', the one recognized by number only, showed the number tattooed on his arm, and proceeded to tell how in the concentration camp they were all reduced to numbers. To the insistence of the prosecutor to tell more, to tell what he saw, the 'katzetnik' could only respond, reiterate, that they were all numbers, that 'in Auschwitz there are no names, their names were their numbers'. After repeated insistence by the prosecutor to tell what he saw, the 'katzetnik', who was not particularly old, or ill, fell prostrate on the ground and almost died of stroke in the court. His inability to testify actually testified, better than any words, to the Holocaust, particularly in the very inability to testify, to produce a narrative which would have meaning. To the repeated questions by the prosecutor, the 'katzetnik' could only show the number and go numb, offering his bare life, in a moment of second death, as a testimony of what was taken from those killed by numbers and as numbers in the Holocaust. Giorgio Agamben: 'The political system of the Holocaust corresponds to a localization without order (the camp as a permanent state of exception). The political system no longer orders forms of life and juridical rules in a determinate space but instead contains at its very centre a dislocating localization that exceeds it and into which every form of life and every rule can be virtually taken.'<sup>6</sup>

From this perspective, he continues, 'the camps have, in a certain sense, in an even more extreme form reappeared in the territories of the former Yugoslavia. At issue in the former Yugoslavia is, rather, an incurable rupture of the old *nomos* and a dislocation of the population and human lives along entirely new lines of flight. Hence the decisive importance of ethnic rape camps.'<sup>7</sup> And the importance, I add, to commemorate the nineteen women and female children exterminated on 4 April 1999 in Djakovica. While the Hague may not be the proper horizon for mourning, it will open a space for justice, maybe, to appear.

The Hague marks an innovation in international politics, particularly as it pertains to the issue of sovereignty. 'What appears singular and new today is the project of making States, or at least head of states in title (Pinochet), and even current heads of state (Milosevic), appear before universal authorities. It has to do only with projects or hypotheses, but this possibility suffices to announce a transformation: it constitutes in itself a major event. The sovereignty of the State, the immunity of the head of state, are no longer in principle, in law, untouchable', writes Derrida in his book on *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*.<sup>8</sup>

The dry enumeration of the indictment, and the dry, objective official narrative that tells so little about the crime of extermination, without witnesses and testimony and with no possible meaningful narrative about it, speaks, as Agamben would say in his *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*,

'only on the basis of an impossibility of speaking', and it is in that impossibility of testifying that the 'testimony cannot be denied. Auschwitz – that to which it is impossible to bear witness – by that very means is absolutely and irrefutably proven'.<sup>9</sup> In the Hague, before the judges, the re-reading of the indictment, this witnessing without testimony, may at least for a moment reopen the space in which these bare lives will again receive their dignity, their individuation, their death. That horizon in which the face of the other reappears in its individuation and in its mortality, which holds us hostage is, maybe, the slim and minimal, but nevertheless bare hope, for the appearance of justice.

### **The Future of Testimony, of the Archive to Come ...**

... And yet, and yet, there is a future for the archive, perhaps, and there is, perhaps, an archive for the future. And that hope would belong, equally, to Freud's notion of the archive which, while producing the erasure of itself in the name of the one and the same, also delegates itself to the traces that carry the promise of the future. Those archigraphic traces open the archive to the Other, to the memory of the other and to every other other. That hope may also, paradoxically, belong to the archiving machine known as the computer. To the capacity to produce the worst also belongs the capacity of the promise and a future. A reviewer of *Archive Fever* noted that 'the substrate of ash is not remote from computer technology. What causes ash is fire, a spark, like electricity, which "burns" right through the silicon'. That electronic capacity, writing right on the ashes, works faster than any other medium. 'Pulsing like a heartbeat, it can communicate that evil is imminent, that a person is in danger, that a life needs to be saved. Electronic mail elects.'<sup>10</sup> Using the computer chip, the silicon chip, returns us back to Egypt, to the desert, every time we testify to something or deposit something into memory. Every act of computerized archivization is also an ethical act, a racing against catastrophe, an act of crossing the desert where no assurance is given. Archivization is an act where the desert comes to haunt us. What is to-come, the *à-venir* of archivization, will have been marked by this passage and will have led through the Silicon Valley, through Egypt and through the desert.

Such a division between the two possibilities of archivization (we could call this the exemplary space of political and ethical decision between devastation and preservation), Derrida says, 'haunts the archive from its origin'.<sup>11</sup> The trace left on the ash in Pompeii observed by the archaeologist, or the trace left on the flickering silicon screen burnt by the fire, belong and testify to the order of the spectral. These traces, divided at the origin, haunt the archive and archivization, from the very beginning to the end. Without end, infinitely, they open the archive to the to-come, they give hope and promise to return.

- 1 Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, (1939); trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) 176.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 3 Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 98.
- 4 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*; trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 90.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 6 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*; trans. Daniel Heller-Rozen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 175.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 176.
- 8 Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) 57.
- 9 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*; trans. Daniel Heller-Rozen (New York: Zone Books, 1999) 164.
- 10 Leonard Lawlor, 'Memory Becomes Electra' (review of Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*), *The Review of Politics*, No. 60 (Fall 1998) 796-8.
- 11 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, *op. cit.*, 100.

Dragan Kujundzic, 'Archigraphia: On the Future of Testimony and the Archive to Come', *Discourse*, vol. 25 (Michigan: Detroit, Winter 2002) 175-7; 181-3.

## The Atlas Group Archive The Secrets File//2002

### File title: *Secrets in the Open Sea*

*Secrets in the Open Sea* consists of 6 large photographic prints that were found buried 32 metres under the rubble during the 1992 demolition of Beirut's war-ravaged commercial districts. The prints were different shades of blue and each measured 110 x 183 cm. The Lebanese government entrusted the prints to The Atlas Group in early 1994 for preservation and analysis.

In late 1994, The Atlas Group sent the prints to laboratories in France and the United States for technical analysis. Remarkably, the laboratories recovered small black-and-white latent images from the prints, and the small images represent group portraits of men and women. The Atlas Group was able to identify all the individuals represented in the small black-and-white prints, and it turned out that they were all individuals who had been found dead in the Mediterranean between 1975 and 1990.

The Atlas Group publicized its findings in a report in December 1996. In the report, no determination was made about the size of the large prints nor about their colour.

The Atlas Group Archive. File title: *Secrets in the Open Sea*. By and/or attributed to: Anonymous. Number of plates in file: 6. Date of production: 2002. Dimensions of plates: 110 x 183 cm. Format: digital colour prints. [www.theatlasgroup.org](http://www.theatlasgroup.org)



**Document Title: *I Think It Would Be Better If I Could Weep***

The Corniche, Beirut's seaside walkway, is renowned these days as a pleasant place to walk, talk and jog. It is also known as the favourite meeting place of political pundits, spies, double agents, fortune tellers and phrenologists.

To keep an eye on all this activity, Lebanese security agents set up cameras in 1992 along the strip. The cameras were manned and were placed inside the mini-van cafés that lined the strip at 18-metre intervals. Every afternoon, the operator of camera # 17 diverted his camera's focus away from the designated target and focused it on the sunset. The operator was dismissed in 1996 but he was permitted to keep the sunset video footage.

The Atlas Group was able to find and interview the operator who had sent the videotape to The Atlas Group. He stated that he focused his camera on the sun when he thought it was about to set and that he returned to his duties once he thought the sun had set. Moreover, he stated that having grown up in East Beirut during the war years, he always yearned to watch the sunset from the Corniche located in West Beirut.

The Atlas Group Archive. Document title: *I Think It Would Be Better If I Could Weep*. By and/or attributed to: Operator # 17. Duration: 00:06:28:00. Date of production: 2000. Screening format: DVD. Colour: yes. Sound: no. [www.theatlasgroup.org](http://www.theatlasgroup.org)

The truth of the documents we archive/collect does not depend for us on their factual accuracy. In other words, it does not matter to us whether blue prints were found buried 32 metres under the rubble in downtown Beirut. We are not concerned with facts if facts are considered to be self-evident objects always already present in the world. Furthermore, we hold that this common-sense definition of facts, this theoretical primacy of facts, must be challenged. Facts have to be treated as processes. One of the questions we find ourselves asking is: How do we approach facts not in their crude facticity but through the complicated mediations by which facts acquire their immediacy?

What we have are objects and stories that should not be examined through the conventional but reductive binary, fiction and non-fiction. We proceed from the consideration that this distinction is a false one and does not do justice to the rich and complex stories that circulate widely and that capture our attention and belief. We must also say that it remains unclear to us what we mean by this proposition, but we are working on clarifying it. [...]

We do not consider 'The Lebanese Civil War' to be a settled chronology of events, dates, personalities, massacres, invasions, but rather we also want to consider it as an abstraction constituted by various discourses and, more importantly, by various modes of assimilating the data of the world.

We proceed then from the hypothesis that 'The Lebanese Civil War' is not a self-evident episode, an inert fact of nature. This war is not constituted by a unified and coherent object situated in the world. On the contrary, for us 'The Lebanese Civil War' is constituted by and through various actions, situations, people and accounts, some of which are manifest in the documents we presented. Not attempting to situate the war in this or that event, person, space and time, we ask and proffer answers to the following questions: How does one write a history of the civil wars in Lebanon? How are the objects, thoughts and emotions of the wars apprehended? [...]

This difficulty [of thinking about and representing the various experiences that are constituted by and that constitute the Lebanese civil war] derives not simply from the 'plurality' of experience, as determined by manifold class, sexual, gender, religious, ideological and political locations; more fundamentally, it remains difficult to describe specifically what we mean when we speak of 'the experience of' the civil war. [...] How do we represent traumatic events of collective historical dimensions when the very notion of experience is

itself in question? [...]

We have never referred to The Atlas Group as a fictional foundation. In most instances, we refer to The Atlas Group simply as a foundation. It is a foundation in the sense that with this project we are founding, building, setting on foot an operation and giving form to a project that is concentrated on the contemporary history of Lebanon. But if you are going to refer to The Atlas Group as a 'fictional foundation' then it is important to be precise about the definitions of the words 'fictional' and 'foundation' in order to avoid the definition of The Atlas Group as a product of the imagination with no material presence. We would refer to The Atlas Group as a fictional foundation if the word 'fictional' connoted 'forming' and 'fashioning' and not 'arbitrary invention'. We do not mind other definitions of 'fictional' as 'feigning', 'counterfeit', 'dissimulation' and 'pretence'.

Our aim with this project has never been to fool viewers and listeners by presenting stories and documents about anything and anyone in order to see what we can 'get away with'. Our interest is in how certain stories and situations capture the attention and belief of viewers and listeners. But we are not investigating this phenomenon in the abstract but specifically in relation to the history of Lebanon. We have always maintained that part of our interest with this project is to examine what has, is and can be said, believed and known about Lebanon, its residents, history, culture, economy and politics. This project operates between what is sayable, believable and known (as true or false). And we do not mean to imply that these terms have a negative relation to each other, that belief is the negative of knowledge, for example. Nor that belief is a flawed cognitive relation to the world and knowledge a correct one. If we proceed from the understanding that belief is the fundamental attitude that a person has when he or she holds that a proposition is true, and that knowledge is certified true belief (by virtue of evidence), then clearly we need to ask about how any proposition becomes true or false and what constitutes evidence. In this regard, and as has been argued, it is clear that what we hold to be true is not necessarily consistent with what is true at the level of the senses, reason, consciousness and discourse but also with what holds to be true at the level of the unconscious. Hence we would urge you to approach these documents we present as we do, as 'hysterical symptoms' based not on any one person's actual memories but on cultural fantasies erected from the material of collective memories.

The Atlas Group (Walid Ra'ad), excerpts from 'Let's Be Honest, the Rain Helped: Excerpts from an Interview with the Atlas Group', in *Review of Photographic Memory*, ed. Jalal Toufic (Beirut: Arab Image Foundation, 2004) 44–5.

**Akram Zaatari**

**Photographic Documents/Excavation as Art//2006**

Part of my work as an artist involves collecting, looking for 'documents' for potential incorporation in my work. I am interested in documents that originate outside art practices, often produced for commercial purposes, or for personal or other reasons. These works clearly originate in an economic system with a certain specificity, and in social environments where they have a particular function to play. In my work, these documents circulate in an art context, as part of a process of study, therefore bringing up political, social, urban and cultural issues pertinent to the contemporary world.

From 1997 my work became more and more centred on researching and collecting existing documents. While doing fieldwork for different documentary works such *All is Well at the Border* (1997) and *Crazy of You* (1997), I collected many documents that helped me study and assess complex political situations, and which provided me with keys to understanding the complex relationships that tie society to its image(s). I ended up incorporating some of this visual material in the videos but there remained significant material that was not included.

In *All is Well at the Border*, I worked on video documents of military operations led by members of the Lebanese resistance against the Israeli army occupation in south Lebanon, and while researching the conditions of detainees in Israeli-controlled prisons, I gained access to Nabih Awada's prison letters. Nabih was caught during a resistance operation in 1988. He was taken to a military court in Israel and sentenced to fifteen years. He stayed in Askalan prison until 1998, when he was released as part of a political agreement with the Lebanese government. His letters showed a sixteen year-old-boy growing up in prison, maturing, trying to convince his mother and family that he was strong, he was doing well, he had friends, and that he was learning in prison what anyone else could be learning in school. His attitude gave the film title its tone (all is well). For me the letters were about distance, which also represented the distance that separated the occupied zone in south Lebanon from the rest of the country, mentally and geographically. It was precisely what I wanted to communicate in my video. I ended up using only excerpts from three letters, and kept the rest in my archive.<sup>1</sup>

In my video *This Day* (2000–03), I tried to focus on this approach, collecting all sorts of documents, photographs, notebooks, and more recently, e-mail attachments of pictures and testimonies from areas of conflicts, particularly Iraq and Palestine. In the context of this work, these documents were linked with a

psychological and geographic journey between Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, commenting on the circulation of images in the divided Middle East; on borders; and on looking at possibilities of representing landscapes and cityscapes charged with historie(s) of past wars.<sup>2</sup> This work marked the first time I used personal documents dating back to my adolescent years living through the Israeli invasion of south Lebanon in 1982. These personal notebooks, photographs and audio recordings stimulated me to look for more personal documents done by others witnessing war.<sup>3</sup> This is why I started collecting the e-mail accounts sent by Mona Mouhaisen and Marina Barham describing what it was like to go through the Israeli invasion of the west bank in 2002. This is also how I met Ali Hashisho, who became the main character of my latest work *In This House* (2002–05). In this video I dug out a letter that Ali had written as a member of the Lebanese resistance. The letter was addressed to the owners of the house that he had occupied for six years with his militant group after it had become the frontline. Ali buried his letter inside a B-10 mortar casing one metre under the earth of the family's garden.

The creation of the Arab Image Foundation in 1997 as a non-profit organization led by artists interested in collecting and studying photography in the Middle East, and of which I am co-founder, facilitated my focus on collecting and studying photography, first from Arab countries and more recently from the archive of Studio Shehrazade, Hashem el Madani, in Lebanon.

The Madani Project takes the entire archive of studio Shehrazade as study material to understand the complex relationship which ties a studio photographer to his working space, his equipment and tools, economy and aesthetics, and further explores his ties to his clients, society and the city in general. The project meets, on the one hand, my interest in living situations as objects of study that testify to modern traditions and complex social relationships and, on the other, the Arab Image Foundation's commitment to preserving, indexing and studying photographic collections in the Arab world.<sup>4</sup> The Madani Project takes shape in a series of thematic exhibitions, publications and videos centred on the photographer Hashem el Madani, born in 1928, and his work. The project began with *Hashem el Madani: Studio Practices*, which studied conventions that shape the making of portraiture studio photographs, and focused on the studio as a space for play in a socially conservative society such as Saida in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from serving as decoration in domestic spaces or displays in family albums, these portrait photographs, like others from the AIF archive, will now be accessible to a wide audience. My artistic position lies precisely in establishing this link; uncovering images, classifying and presenting them as the findings of fieldwork.

Apart from family pictures and events, and images from nineteenth-century European photographic missions to the Middle East and North Africa, few photographs are accessible through public channels. Popular culture in the Arab world has rarely viewed photographs for the sake of looking at photography. People look at photographs because they want to look at themselves, their friends or family. While I was mounting *Mapping Sitting*,<sup>6</sup> in Beiteddine (Lebanon), the public could come in and out of the exhibition space while it was being installed, over eight days. All those who saw me installing 3,000 identity photographs from Anouchian's archive on the wall asked us the same question: 'Who are these people?' I could hear them guessing, saying these were maybe martyrs, singers, actors and actresses, or the couples to be married in an upcoming collective wedding at Tyr! When I explained that these were images of ordinary people, they would ask: 'What's the purpose of exhibiting portraits of ordinary people?'

In my work, photography is a subject before it is a medium. I would rather work on photography as opposed to with photography, which becomes a site of an intervention. Photographs are documents of cultural significance. I am interested in their description, researching their social histories before making them circulate in groups or as individual images in the art world,<sup>7</sup> and before setting up new relationships with the audience at large. With its inclination to research and curating, my work has set up a model for artists' practices acquiring new collections for the Arab Image Foundation. I see my motivation for research not as that of a historian but an artist interested in history; not a social scientist or urbanist but rather an artist interested in socio-urban issues. Such motivation is manifested in various forms, some of which are material, such as publications and exhibitions, others not, such as research, curatorial work, archiving or teaching.

- 1 Nabih Awada's letters were stored by his parents inside an old woman's bag. The letters he received from his parents while in prison were kept in a book he made himself there.
- 2 When I watched the first live images of the US-led war on Afghanistan, I was shocked that these images didn't show anything except open desert landscapes, shot with special night vision equipment. Very often the correspondent's commentary placed them in the military context. Greenish flickering images would focus for minutes on glittering dust particles shot in night vision mode, waiting in silence for something to happen, a glowing missile behind a mountain, barely visible. It would have been a worthy exercise to fabricate such images at home. When I was shooting in the desert in Syria, almost on the border with Iraq, I had these images in mind. This is why the ending shot brings sounds of war onto images from the desert.
- 3 While making *This Day* (2000–03) I worked on the first photographs I took in my life, using my father's Kiev camera: six images of explosions after an Israeli air raid on Mar Elias hill in Saida, on 6 June 1982. The photographs were taken within five minutes. In my personal notebook I

noted that I had taken important photographs.

- 4 The Madani project is one I designed to fit the AIF's mission and at the same time my interests in objects of study.
- 5 I have been working on the archive of Hachem Madani (Studio Shehrazade, Saida) since 1999. What fascinates me is the diversity and magnitude of the archive. For example, contrary to what the photograph of two young men or women kissing might evoke now, it is certainly not a declaration of homosexual love, but a kiss acted by two men or two women. In a conservative social environment where men and women aren't allowed to kiss openly before marriage, and far from any gay culture scene, the image of two men kissing automatically refers to the kiss (the one they long for) between a man and a woman.
- 6 *Mapping Sitting* (a collaboration with the artist Walid Raad in 2002) was the first time the AIF presented an art project as opposed to a curatorial one. The exhibition focused on the formal role of portraiture in shaping notions of citizenship, work, leisure and public space.
- 7 When I started researching photographs for the AIF, I was attracted by a 1950s image taken in Al Qaryatayn, East of Homs, on the edge of the Syrian Badia. The photograph, which I attribute to both historian Jibrail Jabbur and Armenian photographer Manoug, shows five women holding jars, including Jabbur's niece Hoda dressed up in a villager's black dress. Unlike the four other women, Hoda couldn't hold the jar on her head because she wasn't used to it; instead, she carried it on her shoulder. For me that element of difference, visible in the image, provided a key to its deconstruction. It presents us with imperfection, giving a hint of the fact that this image might be a *mise en scène*. I used this image in my latest work, *This Day*, where I travel to Al Qaryatayn looking for some of those who figured in this photograph.

This text was written before the events of July 2006.

Akram Zaatar, 'Photographic Documents/Excavation as Art', 2006. This text has its origins in an interview from which extracts were published as 'Fouiller la photographie', in *Territoire Méditerranée*, ed. Cléa Redalié, Anne Laufer and Maurici Farré in collaboration with Sofiane Hadjadj and Selma Hellal (Geneva: Labor et Fides/Paris: Sofédis-Sodis, 2005).

## Jayce Salloum

### *Sans titre/Untitled: The Video Installation as an Active Archive//2006*

[...] Before coming to Lebanon [in January 1992] and during the year there, the occupation of the South was a predominant concern in our minds. I decided to focus one of the videotapes (*Up to the South ...*) on this occupation,<sup>1</sup> the terms of its representation inherent in the discourse surrounding the issues, (i.e. terrorism,<sup>2</sup> post-colonialism, *occupation*, collaboration, experts, spokespeople, symbols, *resistance*, the *land*) and the history and structure of the documentary genre in regards to the representation of other cultures by the West in documentary, ethnography and anthropological practice and the predicament involved from the perspective of the subjects viewed and the practitioners practising. *Up to the South ...* challenged traditional documentary formats by positing representation itself as a politicized practice. We worked with the material and our experiences of living and working in Lebanon with insistence on a visible resistance to the acts of aggression that documentary partakes in and the violence inherent in its means. The videotape developed a mediating 'language' of transposed experience in the guise of a *reluctant documentary*. These methodologies are refined and developed further in some of the *untitled* videotapes<sup>3</sup> which incorporate them in their own strategies and means.<sup>4</sup> [...]

#### in the meantime

Concurrent to the production of the 'Lebanon' projects<sup>5</sup> I was gathering vast amounts of research materials since 1982 which in themselves and the process of accumulation became the subject for an installation, *Kan Ya Ma Kan/There was and there was not* (1995).<sup>6</sup> It was a transposition of a working studio, an exhausting study paralleling and exposing my projects in Lebanon and challenging the immense history of the construction of *knowledge* of the *Middle East*. It called into question notions of history and research methodology, their role in the effacement of *histories*, and the mediated process inherent in the representation and (mis)understanding of another culture while examining *Lebanon* as a site of production constructed in *our* collective and individual psyches. The audience was encouraged to have a hands-on<sup>7</sup> encounter with the volumes of material in the seemingly endless threads of archives presented. Although the fields and parameters were set out, viewers became part of the process choosing their own paths, initially seduced, compelled and confronted, making decisions and in this manner being responsible for visualizing and *re-constructing* their own cultural/political perceptions.<sup>8</sup> [...]

### **a living archive**

To amass an archive is a leap of faith, not in preservation but in the belief that there will be someone to use it, that the accumulation of these histories will continue to live, that they will have listeners. *Subjective affinities* render a relationship and engagement with the viewer, linking information or *documents* and more ephemeral matter, common struggles across various states. *Objective trusts* in that relationship develop a system of delineating and promise, a commitment that the bank of meanings being produced will recognize its presence and undermine its authority. The taping of subjects is a collaborative process, we are both aware of the medium, the dialogical aspects of the work, of transferring meaning, and the act of translating and editing that is at the core of their expressions and my mediation. The material itself has a sense of 'living', a presentness, a relevance, excerpts of life resting in their context of extraction. Enunciation carries traces of speaking before, the details of verse in an itinerant manner being part of the archive. A collaboration also exists with the viewer of the archive, unknowingly perhaps, taking on a responsibility for the representations that are consumed. The viewer becomes part of the extended archive, collecting, preserving, sharing stories that could possibly disappear, and neglecting others that are disappearing. The archive is untitled, as memory is, as the accounts of the subjects who refuse to be reducible are. The individual parts follow this practice in content, construction and packaging, in their refusal of commodification. In the archive (*and* outside of it) all viewing is incomplete in the sense of having seen all, but also in the sense that this is a living entity, it rumbles along indefinitely, growing in stops and starts, mutating. You can walk into the vaults, there are files, stacks and shelves of material. The records are static but movement is written all over them.

### **back to interstitiality**

*untitled* seeks to articulate the conditions of living and moving, subjectivity strewn between or through borders, nationalisms, ideologies, polarities of culture, geography, or histories. The visible act of *concretizing* and valuing this interstitiality occurs while re-constituting and re-presenting the ephemeral and transitory demarcations in which it resides. These demarcations, or better yet, *zones of being* are situated in the contested and conflicted notions of homeland, nation, diaspora, exile, travel, assimilation, refuge, native, and *other*. Confronted as standard or anomaly, the subject may choose to intersect, suture, or overlay, ameliorate, reshape, redefine, morph, hybridize, separate, erase, augment, or rupture these constructions in a form of resistance or liberation from antagonizing forces. Fixing the temporal, space and time become conflated. A sense of the momentary (living between or during events) stretches from a point

of being into permanency, temporally or spatially bounded, which, as interstitial subjects know, can occupy significant moments or portions of our lives, and in some cases our entire lives.

Interstitial space can be seen as productive and tactical, not merely resting in the traumatic, or devalued in the dysfunctional, transitional, rendered as anxiety, tentativeness or lack. *untitled* subjectively theorizes interstitiality beyond a peripatetic field, as a concrete entity (where one can react or act upon it), a place of living, or a space/time of resistance or change, exploding this notion, this site into discursive areas where it can be seen as a constructive space with increasingly important relevance to our public and private lives. Living the ephemeralization of the fiction known as the concrete and concretizing the ephemeral are two interrelated positions of these sometimes fragile, sometimes more than real polarities that the interstitial subject or state exists between, that state which we all occupy more or less.

What I have seen of your work fascinates me especially because it insinuates a prelude to a much more complex politics, a preparation for something to come. The works that engage me, sometimes with a healthy degree of trepidation, create a space somewhere between a failure of politics and the agonized resolve to persist. And not just the persistence of a person or people but of an idea also: in other words, ideas too have their own biography.

– Jawad Ali<sup>9</sup>

### **ongoing/going on**

My methodological focus is one of constant research, rethinking and augmentation. This is intrinsic to all stages of production; reworking and learning from the material gathered leads the project instead of vice versa. I test out multiple forms and structures, metonymical chains, and formulate a detailed layout accounting for every frame of the piece. The editing stage is utilized as an equal forum of mediation and construction, where unanticipated and meaningful juxtapositions can be formed and the structure of the piece can be tweaked to its final intact shape. None of this is arbitrary (though occasionally affected by chance). The process becomes the product leading to the end result.

The 'syntax' structure developed is evident. The dialectical relationship of the speaker and the spoken is highlighted, the speech laid bare and layered between the story, the field of images, the suggested frames and the butted fictive and documentary process. Difference is articulated in and around the literal and metaphorical spaces of displacement and dwelling, the constitution of this being viewed as crucial social meanings rather than only as an extension of (an)other locale/space or subjective relationship. It is a dialectics of

experience engaging a viscerality of substance.

These collaborations speak for themselves, these works.. the subjects in them speaking for both of us, me trying to prevent speaking for others, at times a paradox and a solution, problematic and potentially full of possibilities in questioning and investigating each of our positions.. juxtaposing myself & the ostensible subjects (in front of the lens), the actual subject being both of us.. investing in each others' subjectivities, and *intersubjectivity*, speaking in collaboration/conjunction, speaking *through* our articulations and mediations.

*untitled* has concerns common to all its parts, addressed at different times in diverse manners. Each part has its own themes which are brought to the forefront, like a juggler who drops some of the objects circling to focus on the ones in hand. These include the disintegrating nation/body, body as nation, nation as metaphor, dysfunction and crisis, abject geographies, agents and monsters, ethno-fascism, displacement and dispossession, the self in interstitial space, refusal as a claim of the subject, and the perseverance of will. A key focus of the project is *borders*, physical and metaphorical, imaginary and ontological, how they are constructed and defined and how they inscribe, control, restrict, shield, and screen us. Borders are seen as barriers, margins and occasionally zones of autonomy. Their emplacement reflecting apparent necessity or uselessness belies their histories and permanence/impermanence, porousness (with the movement of goods and capital) and impermeability (with peoples' movement). When meaning slips around and through borders, frontiers are crossed and new associations are made; when they can't, the body public disintegrates.

Inherent and critical references to conventional documentary (and ethnographic representations) are woven into the tapes as a subtext. Some of these are made visible through the structure, elements, techniques, and aesthetics utilized. Only available light is used, interior location shots, public settings, and abstracted direct imagery are layered underneath and around the textual elements. There is no detached authoritative voice-over dictating what to see or think. Asynchronous voices are edited from the material recorded. This audio component carries its own content (and form) which parallels the video component, forming relationships of the oblique, directional, and expansional, delineating and speculative. Working outside an essentializing gaze (which reduces and conforms the complexities of subjectivity) the audio/text /image configurations selectively release levels and layers of information from shifting *positions* for specific purposes, and at times for specific publics with more vernacular or fluent 'readings' dependent on *language* and affiliation. Entry points are multiple as are means of access. No *monikers* are used, i.e. restrictive forms of identification of the subjects or overdetermined representation of the

sites, no artifice of 'objectivity' or naturalizing discourse of seamless *realism*, nor a 'grand' summarizing narrative or imposition of closure resolving all. With no beginning or end texts to package and objectify the tapes, each is part of one continuous endless whole, confused at times and semi-raw; the project incorporates this even as the end product is less raw and more finished. The tape/installation's unwieldiness is analogical to the provisionality of the process.

A relationship to reality can only be arrived at through the subjective. The basis of *objectivity*, is where subjectivity is placed and how it is revealed in the issues at stake and the circumstances of the lives lived. *untitled* is situated firmly between genres on the margins of the margins in an unstable and unsettling placement, establishing this in-between state as a critical position to elucidate a context or many contexts, look at historic and present day realities, and engage in the transference of lived experiences.

This project renders different forms of resistance, the figure of the resistance fighter struggling for self-determination and liberation, resistance in a broader sense as part of one's daily life struggling against a predetermining hegemony, the act of staying on the ground or in a more domestic means working within, and, where survival is an act of resistance. I attempt to have my work function as a form of resistance which affects social, political, or personal change. Work that points to agency as the first step, and recognizing, challenging and altering our perceptions plays a decisive role. The pivotal relationship is that of *an individual to community*. This is an intrinsic part to *all* forms of resistance (and identity). The acts of taking apart, building and dismantling to build again is more than an exercise in laying bare the elements, process, and motivations of power and regulating bodies, it is an attempt to articulate the conditions that exist for a subject's individual life, and the forces that confront our individual and common realities. These explode and careen from the *person* to the political, to the banal, the intimately exigent construction of nationalism(s), other ideologies, and their conjunctive subjective relationships..

### **opening a fissure/filling a void**

In the triangulation of histories and positions between countries, cultures and subjectivities *untitled* continues building on previous (production and curatorial) projects of mine aiming to implode existing barriers, chipping away at the structure until it dissipates, skeletal then ephemeral, identifying a space to locate difference in forms of articulating, of filling these (intentional and unintentional) gaps in representation, intervening in these spaces between spaces, messing them up with deliberated contentions then leaving for others to clean them up, refine, and reflect upon. Filling spaces with massive amounts of material and a density of meaning is imperative. There is an exigency of excess

required in a demand to be heard/listened to, in the opening of spaces for other silenced or negated voices to emerge. These are politicized spaces where one is challenged to respond (or challenging responses), and one's perceptions and *understandings* are confronted. These openings are productive interstices where possibilities exist to engage, encounter, reflect and act upon the forces that act upon us at work or play in the days of our lives.

Is it enough to provoke sometimes and other times provide a meditative space claiming a calmness in the midst of anxious spaces or vice versa; a brief moment of anxiety, left floating, unresolved but intense in its suggestions and potential. It is a set-up in a way, the polarities contesting each other to create an active space that the viewer can be placed in, a space that is questioning, unresolved, at times lucid, always open, but open with anxiety and angst, pleasure, contemplation, anger, frustration, or sadness. These projects often fall between the cracks, of genre and of attention. There is a price paid in not heeding cautionary tales, breaking rules, pushing the conservatism and limits of institutions, providing layers of realities, tactile, juxtaposed in correlation and contradiction with dominant motifs, a price of denial and censure.

### histories of the self

Who are we allowed to be, who allows us to be who we are or what we identify with, and where is this power usurped from? What constructs us as human beings, what informs our psyche, what shapes how we perceive each other and the world around us? This is not a question of identity but of subjectivity and agency, where we are placed, where we choose to position ourselves, and how the world acts upon us and how we act upon the world. Place is defined by the people who live it (or have lived it) daily, without this, there is no place, no sense of place and no geographic local(e) existing in the real and the imaginary.

Many of us want to claim a space for fluidity of self, an identity that is determined contextually, a subjectivity that is unimpeded. Others seek to hold onto or regain a land, a nation, and the ensuing dilemmas that follow. The right to be self-inscribed spans a flexible local identity and the trans-local, the particularities of each, the movement between the two, the split and interconnectedness, and the usurpation of either. One searches for sense, to make sense out of things, to have something static to grab onto, a set of images, of beliefs, some way of perceiving grounded in their real. This project's fragments of narrative have a coherency and a positioning to question the grand narrative(s) that put/set things in order, it aims to deeply disrupt/interrupt unified notions of nationalism, empire, and identity. These that are experienced through the body. We are all transnational subjects, entwined globally, in assault, complicit with, directly or indirectly affecting all, at risk of being

affected by each other, at anytime, by those we choose to identify with and those we ignore. As viewers and consumers of culture(s) we need to challenge our existing assumptions and preconceptions. We are implicated within these constructions, our histories are present there and here, our projections firmly entrenched.

Re-presenting the accounting of experience over a range of locations and contexts, the act of videotaping is used as a direct way of tracing lives, revelations of the self, and the realities around us, as well as a tool for looking at issues of representation, governing paradigms, and the construction of meaning. The subjective enunciatory experience is central to this. From very local positions, lived history, and working with representations from the ground up that respect the individual subject and is immersed in the complexities of culture(s), models can be developed that confront and theorize the representation of politics and the politics of representation as part of the mandate and mode of production. This critique of all hierarchic forms of information, corporatism, and systems of overarching authority is part of a larger analysis of political and economic strategies and the effects of corporate globalism and the military industrial complex. This project provides a heterogeneous engagement with facilitating a means of contemplation that can counter the imposition of consent.

*untitled* brings together the intensely personal space of the dialogue moment with the context of the intrinsic social and political site, different with each subject but with overlapping and overarching points of contention, correspondence, senses of place, notions of community, domains of discursivity, legacies of conflict and capital, disenfranchisement and the ties of transnational concurrences. This project is not about *difference* per se but about separateness and a connective web. Sometimes I wonder how I carry a presentness of *home* with me, making work where others found and lost theirs, of what is left behind and what remains. How one can go on, building in the political discrepancies of the present, to move forward without ignoring the traces of the past. There is an associated agency, one of praxis or activism of sorts that emerges to engage or enrage.. with whatever means of resistance, *survival*, and will necessary.

We have no boundaries, our boundaries should be the love that continues forward. If we want to define that movement, it goes beyond acceptance, beyond tolerance, it is the capacity to reach an empathy with the other in a way that encompasses everyone, democratically, with liberty, equality and justice, and it's the creating and maintaining of a system that asserts itself without attacking, and without assaulting the other on a daily basis.'

- Soha Bechara<sup>10</sup>

- 1 [footnote 6 in source] The continuous Israeli occupation (1978–2000) of South Lebanon was a very sophisticated form of terror and colonization; attacks were carried out on the Lebanese since 1948 during the nation building process of Israel, and more frequently since 1968. The occupied area was c. 500 sq. miles/1,500 sq. kilometres, approximately 10% of the country, forming a strip from the Southern border c. 10 miles/15 kilometres wide. The area fluctuated in size depending on the Israeli political climate; generally there were 1,500–3,000 Israeli soldiers in the area on a normal 'unescalated' day. Approximately 180,000 Lebanese lived in the occupied zone.
- 2 [7] Then and now the terms 'terrorism' or 'terrorist' are historically cleansed and reassigned to those whose actions we disagree with. We have stopped looking critically at the historical context as the reinvention of these terms has been used to obscure the roots of political conflict and nullify a multitude of ways of thinking and living resistance.
- 3 [8] The untitled videotape components to date are: *untitled part 1: everything and nothing* (2002); *untitled part 2: beauty and the east* (2003); *untitled part 3b: (as if) beauty never ends* (2004); *appendix i: lands* (2001); *appendix ii: clouds* (2001); *appendix iii: other* (2001). See: [www.16beavergroup.org/jayce/](http://www.16beavergroup.org/jayce/); and [universes-in-universe.de/car/sharjah/2005/eng/expo-centre/img-18.htm](http://universes-in-universe.de/car/sharjah/2005/eng/expo-centre/img-18.htm); [www.vdb.org/smackn.acgi\\$artistdetail?salloum](http://www.vdb.org/smackn.acgi$artistdetail?salloum)
- 4 [9] These 'strategies and means' are arrived at through the labouring over the material collected. At some points in the working process they inform the development of the videotape/project and at other points they arise from the material or process itself and the project informs the work that is being done on it. Stylistically the parts and projects may appear to be drastically different from one another even within the same piece of work where an appropriateness of means is sought after, determined, and utilized.
- 5 [10/3] During the year spent in Lebanon over 200 hours of Hi-8, Regular 8 and VHS videotape were recorded and collected, thousands of photographs made, and a half ton of documents, objects and found film salvaged. From these were produced two videotapes: *This is Not Beirut* (1994), and *Up to the South/Taleen a Junuub* (1993); an installation, *Kan ya ma Kan/There was and there was not* (1995); and a photograph series (*sites + demarcations*) (1992–94). We also set up a media studio where people were invited to produce videoworks of their own. Over 16 of these projects were undertaken.
- 6 [11] For full description and images see: <http://www.111101.net/Artworks/JayceSalloum/>; and [http://www.lot.at/politics/contributions/s\\_jayce1.htm](http://www.lot.at/politics/contributions/s_jayce1.htm)
- 7 [12] Museum guards revealed it was the first time they were asked to encourage visitors to handle displayed objects, leaf through files, remove dossiers from the walls and shelves, and make themselves 'at home' in an exhibition. They also admitted they enjoyed the comfort of the sofas where they would take their lunch.
- 8 [13] The *untitled* installation follows upon this but inverts the relationship of initial form and content. It is similarly not modelled on the viewing of art (i.e. a painting exhibition) but on a subjective approach to research/reading an active archive, or sets of walk-in expanding systems of files, CDs, or hypertexted DVD-ROMs. The inversion is the ostensible simplicity of the

presentation/framing of *untitled*.

- 9 [27] Co-founder of the Levantine Cultural Center, Los Angeles, who moderated a screening of my video work titled *everything and nothing and other works, from the ongoing video project, 'untitled'* (1999–2002), in the context of the programme 'in/tangible cartographies: new arab video', held at UCLA Television & Film Archive Theater, November 2002.
- 10 [edited from the more extensive footnote 4 in the original text:] Soha Bechara, a member of the Lebanese National Resistance/Lebanese Resistance Front (the secular resistance coalition) was captured in 1988 by the South Lebanon Army (SLA) for the attempted assassination of their general, Antoine Lahad. She was held for 10 years in El Khiam 'detention centre', administered by the SLA under Israeli Forces control. Detainees were held under no due process of law and were subject to torture methods including electric shocks, beatings, confinement in a cube (1m<sup>2</sup>), soaking, hanging, and long-term sleep deprivation. She was released in 1998. Jayce Salloum videotaped her in Paris, December 1999 for his '*untitled part 1: everything and nothing*'. El Khiam was liberated, along with most of South Lebanon, in May 2000.

This text was written before the events of July 2006.

Jayce Salloum, '*sans titre/untitled: the video installation as an active archive*' (2006), *Projecting Migration: Transcultural Documentary Practice* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007) 2; 3; 11–16.



## Biographical Notes

- Giorgio Agamben**, Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Verona, is known for his social and ethical philosophical works in the tradition of Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. His books include *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1989), *The Coming Community* (1990), *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995), and *State of Exception* (2003).
- Walter Benjamin** (1892–1940) has since the late 1970s been among the most influential cultural critics of the Frankfurt School on the field of visual studies. Translations of his work include *Selected Writings* (4 vols, 1999–2002) and *The Arcades Project* (1999).
- Christian Boltanski** is a French artist based in Paris, whose work since the late 1960s has explored individual and collective memory. Solo exhibitions include the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1984), the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1990), the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain (1996) and The Jewish Museum, San Francisco (2001).
- Marcel Broodthaers** (1924–76) was a Belgian poet and artist whose works of the 1960s and 1970s invited questions about the status of media and the museum. Retrospectives include the Tate Gallery, London (1980) and the Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (1991).
- Benjamin H.D. Buchloh** is the Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of Modern Art, Harvard University, an editor of *October* and a contributor to *Artforum*. His books include a first volume of collected writings, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (2001).
- Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska** have worked collaboratively since 1995 on artistic projects which explore forms of collaborative cultural production. Projects include *The Value of Things* (2000), *Free Trade* (2003) and *Enthusiasm* (2005).
- Călin Dan** is a Romanian-born artist based in Amsterdam who from 1990 has collaborated on media projects with Josif Kiraly in the art duo subREAL. Exhibitions include the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1995) and the Venice Biennale (1993; 1999; 2001). subREAL's website is at <http://www.plueschow.de/fellows/subreal/index.htm>
- Jacques Derrida** (1930–2004) was among the most influential of post-war French philosophers and literary theorists. His central works include *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference* (both 1967), and *Spectres of Marx* (1993).
- Eugenio Dittborn** is a Chilean artist based in Santiago de Chile. During the dictatorship his *Airmail Paintings*, many of which depicted 'disappeared' people, were folded and mailed to exhibitions around the world. Solo exhibitions include the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (1993) and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1997).
- Hal Foster** is Townsend Martin Professor of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University, an editor of *October* and a contributor to *Artforum* and the *London Review of Books*. His books include *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (1985), *Compulsive Beauty* (1993), *The Return of the Real* (1996) and *Prosthetic Gods* (2004).
- Michel Foucault** (1926–84), the French philosopher and historian of systems of thought,

transformed the fields of social science and the humanities with his critiques of social institutions and the operations of power in discourse, such as *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969).

- Sigmund Freud** (1856–1939), the founder of psychoanalysis, in his writings often described the task of retrieving buried memories in analysis by comparisons with archaeological and archival processes. His works are collected in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (24 vols).
- Renée Green**, Dean of Graduate Studies at the San Francisco Art Institute, is an African American artist, filmmaker and writer whose work focuses on anthropological, cultural and historical subjects. Solo exhibitions include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1993), Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona (2000) and Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2002).
- Susan Hiller** is an American-born artist, writer and curator based in England since 1969. Originally an anthropologist, she investigates cultural processes of classification and their manifestations. Solo exhibitions include Tate Liverpool (1996), Museu Serralves, Porto (2004) and Wexner Center for the Arts (2005).
- Thomas Hirschhorn** is a Swiss-born artist based in Paris, whose anti-aesthetic assemblages, monuments, altars and kiosks, using low-grade everyday materials, invite a questioning of the place of art in community and the contemporary status of the monument. Solo exhibitions include the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2004), and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2005).
- Ilya Kabakov** is a Ukrainian-born artist based in New York. An 'unofficial' Moscow artist in the 1960s and 1970s, since exhibiting outside the USSR in the 1980s he became recognized as one of the most significant practitioners of installation art exploring collective history and memory. Retrospectives include the Kunstmuseum, Bern (1999).
- Dragan Kujundzic** is Director of the International Center for Writing and Translation, University of California at Irvine. He has edited collected writings on Walter Benjamin, Mikhail Bakhtin and Jacques Derrida, and is the author of *Critical Exercises* (1983) and *The Returns of History: Russian Nietzscheans After Modernity* (1997).
- Patricia Levin** is a writer, artist and curator whose projects include *Digital Matter Digital Memory* (2004), a series of three exhibitions examining the relationship between memory and information technologies. Jeanne Perrault is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Calgary, Alberta.
- Charles Merewether** is an art historian and writer on contemporary and postwar art who has taught at universities in the United States, Central and South America, and Australia. Formerly Collections Curator at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles (1994–2004), he is Artistic Director and Curator for the 2006 Sydney Biennale.
- Anne Moeglin-Delcroix** is Professor of the Philosophy of Art, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and a former curator of books and prints at the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, where she established a definitive collection of artists' books. She is the author of *Esthétique du livre d'artiste, 1960–1980* (1997).

**Walid Ra'ad** is a Lebanese born artist based in New York who founded The Atlas Group, an imaginary foundation whose objective is to research and document Lebanon's contemporary history. The work of The Atlas Group is presented through lectures, films, photography exhibitions, videos, and a variety of documents from the group's archives. Website: [www.theatlasgroup.org](http://www.theatlasgroup.org)

**Raqs Media Collective** was formed in New Delhi by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta in 1991. Their practice includes archival work, criticism, curating and establishing public spaces for film-based and digital media and photography. Exhibitions include Documenta 11, Kassel (2002) and 'How Latitudes Become Forms', an online exhibit hosted by the Walker Art Center. <http://latitudes.walkerart.org/translocations/>

**Paul Ricoeur** (1913–2005), the French philosopher, progressed from being an authority on phenomenology to an equal engagement with other traditions such as hermeneutics. His influence spread internationally when he taught in Chicago from 1970 to 1985. His works include *Freud and Philosophy: Essays on Interpretation* (1965) and *Time and Narrative* (1984–88).

**Jayce Salloum** is a Lebanese-born artist based in Vancouver, who has worked in photography, video and installation since 1975. Solo exhibitions include the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2002). Information and images of his work can be seen at the website of Video Data Bank: <http://www.vdb.org>

**Allan Sekula** is an American photographer, writer and critic who teaches at California College of Arts. Solo exhibitions include Documenta 11, Kassel (2002) and Santa Monica Museum of Art (2006). An influential theorist of photography since the 1970s, he has published *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983* (1984) *Fish Story* (1995) and *Dismal Science: Photoworks 1972–1996* (1999).

**Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak** is the Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University. Her scholarship of deconstructive textual analysis is combined with a committed feminist critique of colonialism. Her books include *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990) and *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999).

**Margarita Tupitsyn** is a writer on and curator of Soviet and contemporary Russian art. In addition to numerous exhibitions, articles and catalogue essays, her books include *The Soviet Photograph 1924–37* (1996), *Aleksandr Rodchenko. The New Moscow* (1998) and *Malevich and Film* (2002).

**Andy Warhol** (1928–87), one of the most influential artists of the Pop, Minimal and Conceptual era in the 1960s and 70s, used serial repetition of images from archival sources in his work from 1962 onwards. As an extension of his fusion of everyday life and art in his work, he archived his own personal ephemera in the boxes he named 'time capsules', now in the collection of the Andy Warhol Museum.

**Akram Zaatari** is a Lebanese artist and curator based in Beirut who works with photography and video. He is co-founder of the Arab Image Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in 1996 which is dedicated to locating, collecting and preserving the photographic heritage of the Middle East and North Africa, the study of Arab visual culture, and the promotion of contemporary Arab cultural production and analysis. The Foundation's website is at <http://www.fai.org.lb/CurrentSite/index.htm>

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Charles Merewether is an art historian and writer on post-1945 and contemporary art who has taught at universities in Mexico, Australia, Europe and North America. From 1994 to 2004 he was Collections Curator at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. He was Artistic Director and Curator for the 2006 Sydney Biennale.

'Contemporary art constantly requires the construction of new lineages, new histories, to render it critically intelligible. The idea of the archive is currently at the centre of such activities. This anthology offers an illuminating mix of texts - interlacing analysis with artists' writings - and a useful antidote to the sentimentalization of the past.'

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