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Editorial

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Editorial

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Archives are sites of exploration and discovery for all kinds of practices. They are also reinforced structures. Whether as a library of manuscripts, museum store or personal collection, the 'archive-as-repository' catalogues and categorizes, houses and buries, its items. Bringing the contents of an archive to life requires that one ignite what is dormant so as to draw archival materials out into the space of the world to be received and experienced in new ways. Designed to stimulate collaborative conversations and exchanges, in and around the archive, with a view to presenting new approaches to archival experiences, and with them, styles of writing that resonate with the 'archival' as a concept and as a practice, this guest-edited issue expands the field of the archive to incorporate a variety of different practitioner perspectives. Whether through animation, art education, contemporary art, costume, creative writing, information retrieval studies, performance, sculpture, sound and textiles, re-writing the archive from these positions can inform how historical and material remnants of the past may be re-thought in creative practice.

The Legacies of 'Archival Art'

Since the 1990s, 'archival art' has gained currency as a term to describe a distinct mode of thinking, with and through, the documentary record. Art practices have sought to re-work the archive, appropriating its form and function, so as to interrogate its order and logic. It is within the context of creative practice that the registrations of archival imagery offer up counter-memories or ways of thinking beyond the empirical limits of archival knowledge. *Deep Storage*, a book project and exhibition housed at

the gallery Haus der Kunst in Munich, in 1994, showed how the appropriation of certain types of archival activity such as collecting, data storage, the invention of typologies, the re-ordering and re-distribution of space and time, to name a few, are familiar archival operations and strategies in all kinds of art practices. Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen, curators and editors of the project, describe the idea of 'deep storage' as work 'which both anticipates its own future condition and reflects on past, often accumulative, aspects of the artists' visual practice' (Schaffner and Winzen, 1998: 2). The archive's entry into contemporary art, as a concept and form to be scrutinized, has generated new ways to think about modes of ordering, containing and capturing the past, but also ways to read the archive against its structural and functional principles. For example, the writings of Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida and Carolyn Steedman among others, have sought to question the taxonomic and classificatory rules of the archive, in terms of what or whom, is allowed to speak from within its frame. These theoretical discourses are now a feature of many edited readers, with perhaps one of the most popular in current circulation being Charles Merewether's *The Archive*; produced for the Whitechapel Gallery's *Documents of Contemporary Art* series (Merewether, 2006). Collections such as these provide snippets of a trajectory of thinking about what the archive is, what it does and how it is received in cultural theory and art practice. More recently, *All This Stuff – Archiving the Artist* (2012), published by LIBRI, in association with ARLIS (Arts Libraries Society), and edited by Judy Vaknin, Karyn Stuckey and Victoria Lane, engages with the archive as an expanded field, incorporating the artist as archivist, site as archive, digital and on-line archival platforms, and different kinds of meta-archives generated by artists, including anti-archives and invisible collections.

'Interventions-in-Writing-Practice'

In 'The Archival Impulse' of 2004, Hal Foster describes how the ambitions of archival art can transform the archive into a utopia, that is, a set of imagined states or places, where thinking through the past produces new formations and responses about the future. His article examines the work of Sam Durant, Tacita Dean and Thomas Hirschhorn, and their attempts to inadvertently generate a space for a kind of archival imaginary, where the 'no-place of the archive', becomes the 'no-place of a utopia' (Foster, 2004: 22). The reception of this text has led to a variety of exhibitions, events and edited collections on Foster's reading of the counter-hegemonic and utopian character of archival art. However, it is over ten years since Foster's publication and over twenty years since 'archival art' entered onto the stage of contemporary practice. In that time, a diverse field of creative practices, and with them, different perspectives and modes of contemplative enquiry have sought to re-write the archive, as opposed to merely simulating its order and function. The articles presented within this issue do not seek to repeat the familiar terrains of archival art. As discreet and embedded histories, the wider frameworks of creative practice are often unaccounted for in the conceptual histories of the archive, including how the archive is used by practitioners and for what purposes. Therefore, a focus is maintained on the specific character of creative practice and its engagement with the archive as an 'intervention-in-writing-practice', revealing different disclosures of past inheritances, traditions and current engagements with 'archival' material in and through writing itself. Through this thinking new insights into the archive's use as a resource for future making are articulated and understood. Archival encounters, from practitioner perspectives, provide us with tools for thinking and new modes of writing production, which, in turn, can serve to re-visit Foster's account of the utopian

ambitions of archival art in view of the contemporary cultural and technological demands of the present. In particular, the intensities of experience that are captured through the different creative mediums and methodologies deployed by each practitioner to access and re-trace the past; the specific tensions that arise between the archive itself and the personal narratives that think with and through specific items; and the impact of new technologies on modes of access, engagement and analysis of archival experiences. These themes are sites of intersection between each article. Their criss-crossing through different avenues of enquiry keeps the field of the archive open.

Re-writing the Archive

There are at least five distinct avenues of archival enquiry within this issue. The first and perhaps most familiar approach is the experience of the artist residency. Juliet Macdonald, Brass Art and Sheila Gaffney approach the archive through the residency process, articulating the artists' unique relationship to archival contents, including the experience of what the archive can open up and what it closes down. All three explore the creative thinking and writing an artist conjures up through the archival experience. The second approach is concerned with the role of the archive as a repository for certain types of items. Toni Bates and Liz Garland articulate the differences between a fully operational costume store and the value projected onto items in an archive setting. Through a series of questions they explore an item of clothing and speculate on the stories it embodies. Sophie Calvert et al address the role of digital technology in textile restoration and preservation processes, with a particular focus on decaying items at the National Trust Archives. The processes of digital reconstruction are explored in the context of future access. Amanda Tinker, a librarian by training, explores a classificatory approach to retrieval in a local history

photographic archive, showcasing how, from an archivist's perspective, classifications are produced and why. On the other hand, Lisa Stansbie, retrieves, as an artist, a set of designs from Google Patents, which although unrealized serve as prompts for a wider consideration of artistic interventions in online archival territories. The third perspective reflects on projects which have either created archives – whether through sound (Alan Dunn), the found object/thing (Christian Lloyd and Lisa Bristow), or existing contents from a collection (Carson and Miller) – and/or have brought the everyday into contact with the mechanisms of ordering and retrieval. The archive, in this context, seeks to bring contents out into the space of the world to be encountered and for the world in turn, to find its way into unusual archival spaces. The fourth approach takes on archiving as a process. Josie Bernard, Anna Powell, Paul Heys and Art & Currency showcase archiving as a creative practice in and of itself. Bernard looks to twitter as a tool to archive creative process, whilst Powell and Heys discuss the use of blog platforms to generate archives for research purposes. Art & Currency deploys an archival strategy to document, in indexical form, the evolution of a research group over the duration of a year. The third and final avenue of enquiry focuses on art education and the archive. Allie Mills et al, Suzi Tibbetts, Hester Reeve, Rowan Bailey and Kiff Bamford all attend to the archive in the wider contexts of art and design education. Whether through actual research in an art education archive – in this context, the National Arts Education Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (NAEA) – or in the use of archival material as part of ongoing teaching practices, these contributions explore art education itself as an archive of treasures, yet to be unfolded through the creative process. Each article brings its own position to the fore, whether through the mode of writing itself or in a reflective sojourn back to a moment of making/producing, where the logic of the archive and

what it holds is brought into question, or indeed, serves as the generator of new questions for the creative practitioner.

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