

# **ARTISTS' RECORDS in the ARCHIVES:**

**Symposium Proceedings**

**October 11-12, 2011**

at the New York Public Library  
and Fashion Institute of Technology

Sponsored by the Archivists Round Table  
of Metropolitan New York, Inc.



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In October 2011, the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York invited the archives community to explore the topic of artists' records through panels, presentations, and discussion at the symposium, "Artists' Records in the Archives." I would like to thank all of the moderators and speakers for their insights into the rewards and challenges of working with artists' records. The papers that follow present the proceedings from the symposium. In cases where obtaining full papers was not possible, extended abstracts have been provided. I would like to thank Celia Hartmann, Denis Lessard, and Mario Ramirez for editing these papers, Natalie Pantoja for her work as coordinator for this publication, and Shirin Khaki for her wonderful layout design.

-Rachel Chatalbash, President, Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, Inc.

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**Artists' Records in the Archives:  
A Two Day Symposium  
October 11 – 12, 2011  
[www.nycarchivists.org](http://www.nycarchivists.org)**

**Tuesday, October 11, 2011  
South Court Auditorium, New York Public Library  
Fifth Avenue and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York, NY**

10:00am – 10:30am: Registration

10:30am – 10:45am: Welcome – Rachel Chatalbash, Archivists Round Table

10:45am – 12:15pm: **Session 1. Artwork or Documentation:  
Artists' Records as an Extension of the Artwork**

What defines 'a record' when it has been produced by a contemporary artist? Is it possible to generalize about artists' records? Does one find common patterns of accumulation, organization, process and documentation with artists' records? This panel brings together three distinguished professionals to discuss how artists' records function as an extension of the artwork. Presentations will explore the fundamental relationship between the artist, the types of records they produce, and the art object, as well as examining how artists' records contextualize, validate, contradict, and in some cases 'stand-in' for the contemporary art object. The relationship between monetary value and research value for artists' records in light of collection development and appraisal methods will also be discussed, as well as the question of how archival repositories can best function in tandem with libraries and museums to provide the most appropriate collection management practices for contemporary art related archives.

**Moderator - Ann Butler, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College**

Ann Butler, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College  
Chrissie Iles, Whitney Museum of American Art  
Marvin Taylor, Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University

12:15pm – 12:30pm: Break

12:30pm – 1:30pm: **Session 2. Mediating Art Historical Research: Finding a Path Between the Forest and the Trees**

In this session, two archivists will converse with two art historians. They will discuss the roles of archivists as mediators, as well as the expectations of the seasoned researcher when visiting an archival repository. Their discussions will consider multiple issues pertaining to archives-based art historical research, including the archivist's role in refining and enhancing the research process.

**Moderator - Joy Weiner, Archives of American Art**

Joy Weiner, Archives of American Art  
Francine Snyder, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
Jeannette Redensek, The Josef + Anni Albers Foundation  
Thomai Serdari, Department of Art History, New York University

1:30pm – 2:30pm: Break for Lunch

2:30pm – 3:30pm:      **Session 3. Digital Solutions: Initiating Digital Projects to Document Artists' Work, Records, and Processes**

This session focuses on the challenge to successfully create a permanent record of creative work in the digital age. Two case studies, The University of Kansas and White Columns, will be presented. Panelists will speak on KU Scholarworks, an open access digital repository of research by KU faculty and staff, which makes text-based information accessible, such as articles, lecture transcripts, reports, monographs, and conference papers. Next, the open source digitization effort initiated at White Columns, New York's oldest alternative art space, will be discussed. This effort has provided access to White Columns' archival collections using Collective Access software.

**Moderator** - Jenny Swadosh, Kellen Design Archives, Parsons The New School for Design

***KU ScholarWorks: Exploring Digital Institutional Repositories as a Solution for Archiving Artists' Work***

Susan Craig, University of Kansas

Elizabeth Kowalchuk, University of Kansas

***Artists' Records in the Art Space***

Ryan Evans, Museum of Modern Art and White Columns

3:30pm – 3:45pm:      Break

3:45pm – 5:30pm:      **Session 4. Art, Artifact, Artist's Record: Processing and Managing Collections**

In this session, panelists will examine the challenges faced when processing artists' records. Panelists will discuss these challenges in terms of their own day-to-day activities, such as: the possibility of highlighting and identifying artists' records; the complexities of distinguishing between art and artifact; the problems posed by current processing methods as they pertain to artists' records; and how to address an artist's records across multiple institutions. This discussion will then expand to interrogate traditional processing practices.

**Moderator** - Rachel Jirka, Archives & Special Collections, College of Staten Island/CUNY

***Unearthing Treasures: Identifying Original Artists' Records in an Art Library***

Sally Brazil, The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library

***Perpetual Fluxfest: Distinguishing Artists' Records from Artworks in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives***

Julia Pelta Feldman, Museum of Modern Art

***Artful Arrangement: The Unique Challenges of Processing Artists' Papers in Archives***

Erin Murphy, Harvard Art Museums

***The Art of the Possible: Processing an Artist-run Centre's Archives***

Denis Lessard, Centre des arts actuels Skol, Montreal

**Wednesday, October 12, 2011**

**Katie Murphy Amphitheatre, Fashion Institute of Technology  
Seventh Avenue and 27th Street, New York, NY**

10:00am – 10:25am: Registration

10:25am – 10:30am: Welcome - Rachel Chatalbash, Archivists Round Table

10:30am – 12:15pm: **Session 5. Collaborating to Document the Past: Artists and Archivists Working Together**

This session will present case studies demonstrating the possibilities for artist-archivist collaboration. This collaboration will be discussed in terms of processing artists' records, as well as collection development. This session will also examine how this collaboration is not always archivist or institution-driven; artists and their assistants often want to learn more about best practices for the stewardship of their records.

**Moderator** - Farris Wahbeh, Whitney Museum of American Art

***Studio Archives: Voices of Living Artists, Their Assistants, and Their Archivists***

Eumie Imm Stroukoff, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

Heather Gendron, Sloane Art Library, UNC Chapel Hill

***Winnowing with George Herms: Lessons for Collaboration Between Archivists and Artists***

Andra Darlington, Getty Research Institute

***Archiving the Artist-run Movement in Canada***

Marilyn Nazar, University of Toronto

***Building the Archives: Collaboration Between Artist and Archivist in Collection Development***

Mark Vajcner, University of Regina

12:15pm – 1:15pm: Break for Lunch

1:15pm – 2:45 pm: **Session 6. Artists' Papers in the Age of Electronic Reproduction**

This session will examine how the Archives of American Art is treating artists' records. Presentations will discuss: assessing and collecting artists' papers at the Archives of American Art, with an emphasis on donor expectations relative to processing and digital dissemination programs; the role of the archivist in providing greater online access to artists' papers; and types of film, video, and audio recordings found in artists' papers, their potential research uses, and issues of access, preservation, and copyright.

**Moderator** - Erin Kinhart, Archives of American Art

***Acquiring Artists' Papers in the 21st Century***

Charles Duncan, Archives of American Art

***Challenges of Digitizing Artists' Papers***

Erin Kinhart, Archives of American Art

***Artists' Audiovisual Records***

Megan McShea, Archives of American Art

2:45pm – 3:00pm: Break

**3:00pm – 4:30pm:      Session 7. Managing Artists' Legacies: Stewardship of Artists' Records**

This session examines the challenges of managing artists' legacies. Three case studies will be presented. Martinez will outline RISD's institutional policy of giving each student's work equal weight in the archives, regardless of the success and acclaim some students may achieve after graduating. Using a recent acquisition, Esposito and Holt will explore archival repositories as sites for preserving "living curricula," in which learning, teaching, and research are generative, fluid processes situated in evolving experiences, times and places. Hemler will discuss the potential issues with monumentalizing notes, sketches and other documents by artists, using Felix Gonzalez-Torres as a case study to explain how the inherent open-endedness of his work may be threatened by focusing specifically on the artist's hand.

**Moderator** - Gretchen Opie, The Dedalus Foundation

***There Are No Art Stars: Student Work in Context in the RISD Archives***

Andrew Martinez, Rhode Island School of Design

***Archiving a Living Curriculum: The Judy Chicago Collection***

Jackie Esposito, Penn State University

Ann Holt, Penn State University

***The Conflict Between Archives and Artist Monumentalization***

Allison Hemler, The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

**4:30pm – 4:45pm:**      Break

**4:45pm – 5:45pm:      Session 8. Born Digital: Ensuring Access to Artists' Records Created by Emerging Technologies**

This session will investigate born digital artists' records. In addition to email and other electronically created documents, web 2.0 technology, social media, and virtual realities are now mediums archivists must contend with when managing artists' records. Saunders will outline methods used to preserve artists' social media content with archival value, including blogs as well as Twitter and Facebook. Moser will examine how organizations that have an historical involvement studying and addressing these trends may or may not be responding to ensure the future of artists' records.

**Moderator** - Ben Fino-Radin, Rhizome at the New Museum

***Archiving Social Media Content by Visual Artists***

Heather Saunders, Greyhouse Publishing

***In The Blink of a Digital Eye***

Dennis Moser, University of Wyoming

*This event has been made possible by the generous support of MetLife and the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.*

## Welcoming Remarks: Artists' Records in the Archives

Thanks to everyone for coming here today. My name is Rachel Chatalbash and as President of the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this symposium.

This event helps celebrate the Archivists Round Table's 23rd annual New York Archives Week. For those of you new to New York Archives Week, The Archivists Round Table, along with hundreds of organizations in the archives community across New York State, celebrates this event with special commemorative activities across the New York City boroughs. This year, the Archivists Round Table has been able to host more than twenty activities, including open houses, exhibitions, lectures, workshops and behind the scenes tours of archives throughout the City. In particular, I would like to draw your attention to a few Archives Week activities that are related to the arts, and therefore might be of interest to this particular audience. The Asian American Art Center Artists Archive is offering an overview of its activities; the Franklin Furnace Archive is offering an open house and demonstration of the Franklin Furnace Database Project; the Frick Collection Archives is offering a behind the scenes tour of their repository; and Rhizome is hosting a lecture on their current preservation strategies. Copies of the Archivists Round Table's New York Archives Week calendar, which list these events and many others, are available at our check-in desk. I hope that you will be able to join us.

Today marks the first day of the symposium, "Artists' Records in the Archives." This symposium will address the relationships among artists' records, artwork, and artists; the significance of artists' records in archives for scholars and curators; and how archivists and special collections librarians manage artists' records in their repositories.

The idea for this symposium emerged out of very practical concerns. As an archivist working at the Guggenheim Museum, I work with collections of institutional records. Within these collections are records created by artists, such as correspondence, exhibition proposals, notes, annotated brochures, catalogues, and exhibition invitations. Some are handwritten, some are typed with a signature, and many bear witness to the creative process, often including sketches, doodles, and other notations. In the context of these larger institutional collections, it is often difficult to know what to do with these docu-

ments. Should they be treated just like any other document or should they be given more attention in regard to processing decisions and preservation? It became clear to me that the need to process a large quantity of records in an efficient and systematic manner was at odds with the need to consider and assess the value of each individual document.

In 2008, in order to explore how the archives of different arts organizations were treating artists' records, I conducted a survey of institutions with major holdings of artists' records, including museums, historical societies, universities and non-profits. The goal of the survey was to determine best practices when dealing with artists' records, particularly if preservation measures are needed, or when researchers come into contact with the material. The survey results led to email interviews and further discussions with archivists. My survey demonstrated that there was clearly no general or "best" practice when it came to dealing with artists' records. There was, however, great interest in discussing this topic, as my concerns were shared by many. One goal of this symposium is to begin this discussion through presentations and panels.

A second goal of this symposium is to broaden the discussion surrounding artists' records and archival collections. In recent years there have been numerous symposia and conferences dedicated to artists' archives, art history and "the archive," as well as to the use of archival materials by contemporary artists. While these symposia are crucial, these investigations have been driven almost entirely by art historians and have not included the perspectives of archivists and special collections librarians, who are all significant stakeholders. Among the symposium's speakers are archivists, librarians, artists, art historians, curators, conservators, and students. It is my hope that the multiple perspectives shared over the course of the symposium will lead to increased dialogue regarding artists' records in archives in the future among these individuals.

Before we begin our first session, I would like to thank MetLife and the Littauer Foundation for their generous support of Archives Week events and this symposium. I would also like to thank the Symposium Committee for their hard work and dedication to this event. And of course, I would like to thank the New York Public Library and the Fashion Institute of Technology for making this event possible.

# Artwork or Documentation: Artists' Records as an Extension of the Artwork

## Artists' Records as an Extension of the Artwork

Ann Butler, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College

The title of this panel, Artists' Records as an Extension of the Artwork, is intended as a definitive statement on the unique and complex relationship between artists' records -- the physical traces, the evidence remaining from the production of a contemporary work, the artwork, and the artist. The statement is also intended to provoke -- to speak to the increasingly ambiguous nature of what constitutes a work of art today, as contemporary artists are involved in finding ways to represent the production of a work within the work itself. The assumption that a clear division still exists between the artwork and its archival components no longer necessarily holds. Determining where the artwork begins and where it ends, in relation to its archival traces can only be determined through a close reading of the work in relation to its archival documentation. The premise that the categories of "art" and "documentation" are based on a mutually exclusive "either/or" construct, rather than "and" -- reflects a dualism that is no longer valid as a working assumption. Furthermore, the expectation that repositories collecting the archives of contemporary artists do not contain works of art is false.

### Certificates

Not only are the boundaries between what constitutes the artwork and its documentation increasingly in flux, but artists over the past fifty years have incorporated archival structures, concepts and systems, including inventories, classification schemes, documentation, and taxonomies into the conceptual framework or visual vocabulary of works of art. Increasingly, artists are adopting specific legal and business practices to ensure the validity and authenticity of artworks that may not exist in a persistent physical form. Artists have used certificates since the 1970s as a contractual means of authenticating works of art. Certificates are also used to denote the ownership of a work as well as the intent of the artist, particularly in terms of instructions for display and exhibition. In many cases the certificate stands in place of the physical work. The certificate grants the owner permission to fabricate an authorized version of the work according to the artist's instructions and intent. Authorship of the work, resides with the artist, and not with the collector.

One of the best writers on this topic is Martha Buskirk. In a wonderful new essay titled "Certifiable" for the current exhibi-

tion, *In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art*, Buskirk considers certificates a form of displaced signature by the artist, as well as serving as a market instrument certifying authenticity, and in some cases also "providing artists with an alternate means to articulate something about the work, or [providing the artist] with the potential to constitute the work..."[through the certificate.]<sup>1</sup>

As an extension of some of the appropriation practices of the past thirty years, artists are also exhibiting portions of libraries and archives, their own and others, as works of art. In 2009 Joseph Grigely, a Chicago-based artist, exhibited an artwork at the Rowley Kennerk Gallery called *The Gregory Battcock Archive*. This work consists of a selection of the personal papers and manuscripts of Gregory Battcock housed in vitrines custom designed and installed by Joseph Grigely. In 1992, in Jersey City, NJ, Grigely discovered a box containing correspondence, unpublished essays, photographs, postcards, and mementos of Gregory Battcock's, the influential art critic who was found murdered in 1980 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Grigely's homage to Battcock is a study of how archives and personal papers represent their author and subject as well as an exploration of the relationship between the complexities of interpretation and misinterpretation.

From 2005 to 2009 a portion of Martha Rosler's personal library has been exhibited as a work of art. The installation consists of approximately 7,700 titles from the artist's personal collection. Anton Vidokle opened the Martha Rosler Library to the public in November 2005 as part of a storefront reading room at e-flux in New York City. Since 2005, the installation has traveled internationally to seven locations.

Currently, at Cleopatra's, an art space in Brooklyn, a portion of Lynne Cooke's personal papers is being exhibited. Titled *Lynne Cooke – Three Shows, 1993, 1999, 2007*, the exhibition presents documentation for three shows curated by Cooke between 1993 and 2007.

Artists and curators are conceptualizing not only artists' records but the manuscripts, archives and libraries of others as potential contemporary works of art. These artistic practices are not new. Artists' records have been a fundamental component of artistic practice for the past half-century. What is new is the willingness of the art public to engage with documentation as the artwork.

<sup>1</sup> Martha Buskirk, "Certifiable" in *In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art*, Amsterdam: Roma Publications; Middelburg: in co-production with SBKM/De Vleeshal, c2011: pg.101

# SESSION 1

## On Evidence

If we look back at the historical evolution of archives, we know that archives evolved out of governmental, judicial and legal frameworks, to serve as repositories for official authoritative and legally sanctioned records. The Society of American Archivists Glossary of Archives and Records Terminology defines the term evidence as:

n. – 1. Something that is used to support an understanding or argument. – 2. A record, an object, testimony, or other material that is used to prove or disprove a fact.<sup>2</sup>

Within a judicial or legal framework, the concept of evidence is defined in terms of its relationship to facts. Charles Merewether, in his introductory essay for the 2006 publication, *The Archive*, cites a broad historical definition of archives when he says that:

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 remembrances 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.<sup>3</sup>

Julie Ault, in her recent book, *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material*, describes archives as a “primary source for the potentially infinite production of history.”<sup>4</sup> At the most basic and fundamental level, contemporary art archives provide fragmentary physical evidence and conceptual traces of an artist’s thought process, artistic intent, construction and assemblage, and realization of a work of art.

Artists’ records also provide evidence of the day-to-day activities of an artist as well as documentary evidence of works that may no longer exist or whose nature is transitory and ephemeral. They also provide a window into an artist’s social and professional networks, and artistic and intellectual influences.

Artists’ records are an invaluable primary source for penetrating the artist’s thought process, intent, and production processes for a given work within a specific period of time. If evidence is one of the operative concepts of archives, how does it function in relation to the contemporary arts and artists’ records?

Particularly within the realm of the visual, literary, and performing arts archives, the concept of evidence has two equally operative components, *presence* and *absence*. Is an evidence-

based reading of artists’ records based solely on the documents and information present in the archives or is there information to be gained through the absence of records? Does the legally defined concept of “evidence as fact” have any bearing within the realm of contemporary art archives?

## The Nature of Artists’ Records

If artists’ records exist as a form of fragmentary evidence, what information do they provide? What do artists records consist of and what physical shape do they take?

What purposes do they serve, for the artist, critics, scholars, and curators? How do they accumulate? How are they structured and organized? Does the physical arrangement and internal logic of the records provide any information about how the records were created and used? Do the records provide information about how an artwork was produced and exhibited, as a singular work and in relation to the artists’ larger body of work?

As archivists working with, preserving, and providing access to the papers and archives of contemporary artists, we are situated in a unique position in relation to the artist, their work, and their archives. Often our primary point of entry in engaging with an artist, an artists’ collective, or group and their work, is through the archive: their personal papers and records. Our position as archivists means that we understand the artist, their work and their practices primarily through engagement with their records. How does this perspective influence our own reading of artists’ records and the complex relationship they embody between the artist and his or her work?

How do we update and refine archival concepts and institutional practices to serve best the archival collections, and provide the best stewardship; ensuring the material’s visibility, integrity, access and preservation, while at the same time, adhering to key principles and concepts of archival practice? As institutional repositories within museums and collecting repositories within academic research institutions, each with our own mandates and missions, resources, and institutional practices, how do we ensure that the collection management methods utilized do not diminish and disable the material through adherence to rigid, simplistic, and outmoded definitions and archival practices? How do we ensure that we work dynamically with the artist, their representatives, curators and the scholarly community to develop collection management practices that support the artist, their records, and legacy, and not hinder interpretation, activation, and ongoing scholarship?

## CCS Bard and the Hessel Museum of Art: Building a Contemporary Art Research Center

The Center for Curatorial Studies and the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College is an exhibition, education, and research

<sup>2</sup> Society of American Archivists, Glossary of Archives and Records Terminology, <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/>

<sup>3</sup> Charles Merewether, “Introduction” in *The archive*, London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006: pg. 10

<sup>4</sup> Julie Ault, “Case Reopened: Group Material” in *Show and tell: a chronicle of Group Material*, London: Four Corners Books, c2010: pg. 211

center dedicated to the study of contemporary art and curatorial practices from the 1960s to the present day. Marieluise Hessel and Richard Black founded CCS Bard in 1990. The graduate program in curatorial studies was initiated in the fall of 1994 with the first students graduating in the spring of 1996.

The foundation of the Center's permanent collection is the Marieluise Hessel Collection of 3,000 works by more than 400 of the most prominent artists of the 20th and 21st centuries. The collection is international in scope and new acquisitions are added annually to the collection. The Center's original 38,000-square-foot facility opened in 1992. In 2006 it was expanded and completely renovated with the addition of the Hessel Museum of Art, a 17,000 square foot addition specifically designed for exhibitions curated from the Marieluise Hessel Collection.

The Library and Archives at the Center for Curatorial Studies are a vital research center specializing in curatorial studies and the contemporary arts, as well as being an integral component of the Center's 2-year graduate program supporting the advanced research of curatorial studies students. The Library contains over 25,000 volumes focusing on post-1960s contemporary art and curatorial practices. The main collection includes an extensive collection of international exhibition catalogs, artists' monographs, and art journals and periodicals covering the contemporary arts and curatorial practices. Special Collections includes approximately 80 historic artist-produced periodicals, an extensive collection of limited edition, signed, and out of print exhibition catalogs, a media collection, and a collection of artists' books. Through donation and purchase, the library is comprehensively collecting the full publication history of select international exhibition venues, art publishers, and small art presses.

The Archives contain the institutional archives for CCS Bard and the Hessel Museum of Art as well as the organizational archives of select galleries, artist-run spaces and initiatives, and the personal papers of select curators and artists. The Archives also maintains a collection of artist files for the artists represented in the art collection, as well as Study Collections, which document significant international curators, and a selection of historic exhibitions. The research collections at CCS Bard, including the Library and Archives and the permanent collection, support the study of curatorial practices, theory and criticism, and exhibition making, broadly defined. The Library and the Archives were initially established with a gift of books from Marieluise Hessel's personal library and manuscripts and correspondence from her personal papers. In many ways the collections at CCS Bard document her activities as a contemporary art collector.

CCS Bard is small enough that all three programmatic components, the Hessel Museum, the Library and Archives, and the Graduate Program function together to contextualize each other and to provide educational opportunities and exposure,

investigation, and inquiry into the practicalities of exhibition making, collection development, and management practices for all types of cultural repositories focusing on contemporary art and culture. As in any type of collecting repository, materials are placed in the collection deemed most appropriate for those materials at that time. These decisions can also be based on resource allocation, donor restrictions, access, and use policies.

For example, when I first came to CCS Bard in the summer of 2008, there was no Special Collections area designated within the Library. Rare and valuable print publications by artists were maintained with the art collection. As a result, these holdings were cataloged in the museum's collection management system with no bibliographic presence in the library's online catalog. In January of 2010, a Special Collections area was established and a new storage area designed and built. Artists' books and other rare print publications were transferred to the new Special Collections area and full cataloging has been underway for the past year, providing visibility to this important collection of publications by artists.

### Nam June Paik

I have one example to show you that illustrates the archival traces that exist across collection types at CCS Bard and the Hessel Museum. The Hessel Collection contains several works by Nam June Paik. One of the works, *Whitney Buddha Complex* was acquired in 1986. The Library contains early exhibition catalogs of Paik's: each signed and inscribed to Marieluise Hessel as she acquired the catalogs from Paik at the same time as the artwork. In the Archives we have a newspaper clipping from the *Allemagne Zeitung* that contains a sketch by Paik with a written and signed statement authenticating the version of the work acquired by Hessel. In addition, two years ago I discovered that our first issue of *Del/Collage* magazine contained handwritten notes clipped to the pages for a Paik contribution. I have since verified that the handwriting on the notes is Paik's. The manuscript appears to be performance notes for a Fluxus performance by Paik. The inscriptions, notes, and archival traces found in these materials document an artist's involvement with an art collector and the ways these art works, publications and manuscripts, were produced, circulated, and eventually acquired.

### Collection Management Practices

Because CCS Bard serves as a test bed for curatorial strategies, collection development, and collection management practices, transparency is key. Students need to know why we, as professionals, do what we do. Within that vein, developing hybrid collection management practices that integrate the best models and systems from library, archives, and museum domains is our mission. Pulling from each of these domains, at CCS Bard we actively work with students to expose them to the best practices and methodologies for documentation, research, and

## SESSION 1

collection management. Our mandate is to build a robust collection that actively supports research in curatorial studies and the contemporary arts.

### **What Is Our Role as Archivists?**

If one of the fundamental dynamics of contemporary art is the inquiry of cultural systems, values, and institutions in contemporary life, in being the stewards of contemporary art archives, is it not our responsibility to question, revise and adapt long-standing archival definitions, categories, and practices that may no longer be serving the best interests of the material in our repositories?

The distinction between art and its archival traces is no longer as fixed as it once was and artists' records are very much an extension of the work of art. A benefit of this trend is that there is more awareness of the cultural significance and the research value of artists' records. Likewise, right now there are more collectors (public and private, individuals and repositories) for this type of material.

The downside of this development is that artists' records, in being considered part of the work of art, are increasingly appraised and valued at a rate that can far exceed the resources of many academic and cultural collecting repositories. This potentially limits the accessibility of this unique material for scholarly research purposes, placing it solely within the confines of private art collections.

What are the logistical ramifications of this grey zone of am-

biguity? The stakeholders—museums, archives, galleries, and estates—need to reach a consensus generally on a case-by-case basis of what constitutes the archives and what constitutes the art work, so as to feasibly manage the legacy of an artist, and place the art works and the artist's records in appropriate repositories.

### **Moving Forward, What Are the Challenges?**

For the archives community, the challenge is to remain open to inquiry, revision, and adaptation and to develop new systems and best practices where the old ones no longer suit the needs of the material, without abandoning fundamental concepts and principals of archival practice. It's also crucial that we make our practices more transparent as an opportunity for those outside the archival community to understand better our methods, principles, and decision-making processes in responding to current heightened interest in contemporary art archives.

## Abstract for Second Presentation: Artwork or Archive? Collecting Art Archives and Artists' Papers at the Fales Library, NYU

Marvin Taylor, Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University

For the past twenty years, Marvin Taylor has been building one of the foremost collections of late 20th century archives and manuscripts at the Fales Library at New York University. The Downtown Collection is an attempt to document the downtown arts scene that evolved in SoHo and the Lower East Side of Manhattan during the 1970s through the 1990s. During this time, an explosion of artistic creativity and interdisciplinary art practices radically challenged and altered traditional literature, music, theater, performance, film, dance, photography, video, and other art practices. Many of these artists questioned traditional artistic and cultural assumptions at the most basic levels through artistic practices that were intensely collaborative, multidisciplinary, multimedia, and non-hierarchical. One of the primary goals of the Downtown Collection is to collect the full range of artistic outputs and practices, regardless of physical format. The collection consists of 9,000 linear feet of archives including over 65,000 media elements including audio and video recordings, motion picture film, and born-digital files. The Downtown Collection at the Fales Library is the only collection of its kind in a special collections division of an academic research library. By collecting across disciplines and conventional boundaries, as well as across physical formats, the

Fales Library's Downtown Collection is at the vanguard of new collection development and collection management practices.

By presenting select items from the various archives and manuscript collections that comprise the Downtown Collection, which in differing contexts could be considered either a work of art or documentation, Marvin Taylor illustrates how tenuous and context-sensitive artists' records can be through examples such as: The Magic Box, a cutting script for the unfinished film, *Fire in my Belly* from the David Wojnarowicz Papers; as well as performance documentation from the Judson Dance Theater Archives; photographic documentation from the AIR Gallery Archives; the Martin Wong Papers; and the Creative Time Archives. Taylor also explores the inherent difference between monetary value and research value for artists' records. He describes scenarios whereby artist's records may be considered works of art with high monetary value, when other forms of documentation by artists may have much less monetary value but more intrinsic research value. Taylor finishes with a call for archives and cultural repositories to devote more resources to developing a suite of common methods and tools for the preservation of born-digital artists' records before this material is permanently lost.

## Abstract for Third Presentation

Chrissie Iles, Whitney Museum of American Art

As a curator of contemporary art at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Chrissie Iles relies on various forms of archival research engaging with and exploring the personal papers of artists and their archives to establish fully a historical reading of a specific work, the artistic practices and methods involved, and the artistic intent that drives the work.

Artist's records serve as primary sources of information and physical evidence, which for contemporary art curators become all the more valuable for works that are ephemeral, time-based, site-specific, or performance-based. With these types of works, occasionally all that remains are fragmentary records of the work's production, fabrication, installation, or exhibition. The artwork itself may no longer exist in a stable physical form.

Chrissie Iles illustrates her talk with several examples of artists and estates that she has worked with closely and the various types of artists' records she has relied on to develop in-depth

readings of specific works and make curatorial decisions regarding the work's interpretation, presentation and installation.

As part of her role as curator, she questions whether curators view artists' records differently than the artists themselves or their estates or representatives. She concludes that artists and their estates do not always appreciate or support the intrinsic historic or research value of artists' records. In addition, she states that there is an unlimited hunger for content which can increasingly lead towards artists' records being monetized or appraised as works of art. There is a one-way movement from archival document to work of art. Iles questions what the ramifications are for curators and scholars who are committed to a historical reading of works of art and how this trajectory impacts the art market, curatorial practices, scholarship, and artistic legacies.

## SESSION 2

# Mediating Art Historical Research: Finding a Path Between the Forest and the Trees

## Introduction

What are the current expectations of researchers when visiting an archival repository? How have advancements in technology and access changed research practices? In this session, two archivists, Joy Weiner, Archives Specialist, Archives of American Art and Francine Snyder, Director of the Library and Archives, Guggenheim Museum, conversed with two art historians, Thomai Serdari, Director of Research Collections and Adjunct Professor at the Department of Art History, New York University and Jeannette Redensek, Catalogue Raisonné Researcher for the Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings of Josef Albers at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. Together, they discussed the role of archivists as mediators, and explored assumptions that archivists and researchers bring to the reference encounter. Traditional methods of archival research, such as working with original papers at a repository, were contrasted with and compared to new access methods, such as digitized collections. The discussion considered multiple issues pertaining to archives-based historical research, including the archivist's part in refining and enhancing the research process. An edited transcript of the presentation follows.

-Francine Snyder and Joy Weiner

## Introduction to Panel Discussion

Joy Weiner, Archives of American Art

The purpose of this discussion is to explore with the panelists how they have used primary sources in their research and, specifically, to seek their views on how we as reference archivists can facilitate the research process for the art historian. Francine and I will explore the subject of consulting artists' papers and art-related records at a research center and an institutional archives with two senior art historians, Thomai Serdari and Jeannette Redensek. Francine has worked closely with Jeannette at

the Guggenheim Museum Archives and I have assisted Thomai at the Archives of American Art.

Francine and I will each in turn give a brief overview of our institutions and the missions that define the scope of our work. We will then ask Thomai and Jeannette to discuss their experiences working with original materials at the Archives of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum Archives, and other repositories, and their expectations of the reference encounter.

## Introduction to the Archives of American Art

Joy Weiner, Archives of American Art

The Archives of American Art was founded in 1954 by art historian, Edgar P. Richardson and Detroit businessman, Lawrence A. Fleischman. Their initial goal was to establish a center that would promote research and publication on the visual arts in America.

In 1970, the Archives of American Art (referred to as "AAA") joined the Smithsonian Institution. The published mission of the Archives reads as follows:

Founded on the belief that the public needs free and open access to the most valuable research materials, our collections are available to the thousands of researchers who consult original papers at our research facilities or use our reference services remotely every year, and to millions who visit us online to access detailed images of fully digitized collections.

AAA holds the papers of artists, dealers, collectors, art his-

torians, critics, as well as the business and financial records of museums, galleries, schools, and associations. In the case of artists' papers, we collect documentation that reflects artists' activities and relationships with family members, colleagues, galleries, museums, and others in the course of their careers. Such documentation may include biographical material, correspondence, diaries and journals, scrapbooks, writings and notes, sketches and sketchbooks, business records, audiovisual materials, photographs, and artifacts.

## Overview of Reference Services

As a reference specialist at AAA's Research Center in New York, I am responsible for providing reference services and processing collections. I help our users (graduate/undergraduate students, art historians, critics, curators, dealers, writers, and collectors) to find and utilize microfilmed collections, transcripts of oral history interviews, and original materials.

Based on user patterns in the New York office from 2010-2011, I noticed a shift in the way researchers approached the unfiled collections – and this in turn, impacted, to some extent, the reference assistance I provided to them. I found that researchers, many of them senior art historians, were eager to begin their review of the collections without any preliminary discussion. Only after they had sharpened the focus of their research by perusing each box, often making serendipitous discoveries along the way, would they have specific questions about the collection or about other relevant sources.

Today's panel discussion was formed as a result of my obser-

vations at the AAA. Was my assumption correct that this shift in recent user patterns implied a trend? Did researchers no longer require the preliminary discussion about using primary materials? Francine and I thought it would be of interest to hear from two researchers about their methodology when working with original materials, especially collections that are in a raw state or have been processed to a minimal level. We believe that our exchange with Thomaï and Jeanette will provide insight into the assumptions scholars have when conducting research and this in turn would shed light how we as archivists can best assist them.

## Introduction to the Guggenheim Museum Archives

Francine Snyder, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

The mission of an archives repository affects the relationships among researchers, access, and reference provided. As Joy has described, the mission of the Archives of American Art, a major research center and manuscript repository, emphasizes free and open access to all research materials. The Guggenheim Museum Archives is an institutional archives with a mission to match its function. To understand fully the Archives' mission, a brief overview of the institution is necessary. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation was founded in 1937 by Solomon R. Guggenheim in order to preserve his private collection of European and American abstract paintings, and with a desire to make them available for public viewings. Its modern day mission is to promote the understanding and appreciation of art, architecture, and other manifestations of modern and contemporary visual culture; collecting, preserving and researching art objects; and making them accessible to scholars and an increasingly diverse audience through its network of museums, programs, educational initiatives, and publications.

Therefore, the Guggenheim Museum Archives' mission is to collect, preserve, and provide access to all historical documentation of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and the records related to the history and activities of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum for the purpose of administrative support and historical research.

As an institutional repository, Guggenheim Museum Archives' mission and collecting is dedicated to preserving the history of a single institution, the Guggenheim, and the repository actively documents its institution's ongoing activities. Therefore, compared to the Archives of American Art, its scope is much narrower in terms of what it holds and what it provides. This can make fostering and mediating research a pleasure and challenge, both for the archivist and researcher.

## Overview of Reference Services

To set the stage for describing research and reference at the Guggenheim Museum Archives, permanent staff consists of a Director of Library and Archives, and an Archivist. In addition to reference, staff is also responsible for acquisitions, processing, community outreach, records management, budgeting, and fundraising.

Archives access for external researchers is limited to processed collections, which currently consist of approximately 800 cubic feet. Access to the unprocessed collections is dependent on the time and resources that the department can permit. Furthermore, onsite access for non-staff is limited to one person per day, three days a week. This restricts research, despite a mission and desire to provide reference and access.

Research into and reference to artists' records are particularly interesting to look at in this context. The Guggenheim Museum Archives' collections follow the principle of provenance meaning that our collections are based on the "office of origin," which for us are records from curatorial and director's office departments. Whereas a researcher at the Archives of American Art may be able to access the majority of an artist's records in a single collection, a researcher wanting to discover information on a particular artist at the Guggenheim Museum Archives needs to navigate through all of our collections to understand how that artist fit into our institution's history.

To start the discussion on researchers' experiences using artists' records in our repositories, I turn the conversation back to Joy.

## SESSION 2

### Conducting Research at the Archives of American Art: Joy Weiner in Discussion with Thomai Serdari

Joy Weiner (JW): Thomai, please tell us about your work as the Director of Research Collections for the Department of Art History at New York University.

Thomai Serdari (TS): *My primary role is collection development for the Department of Art History at NYU, both in terms of text and images. We already have a collection of about 40,000 volumes of books, and another 20,000 volumes of periodicals, 0.5 million slides, and about 40,000 digital images. The Department was founded by H. W. Janson (who authored Janson's History of Art). He was an avid book collector and dedicated photographer. His book collection and photographic archives are now part of the departmental collection. His archives in particular, which is open to scholars, is very interesting because it comprises pictures he commissioned for his books Donatello and 19th Century Sculpture or photographs he took on his own, primarily of European public monuments. There are, of course, his offprints, manuscripts of his books, and some material that relates to his role as the Chairman of the Department. For example, we recently had a request from Germany, from the son of Hans Gerhard Evers, a German art historian, who acted as a photographer for the German army during the Second World War. Janson had bought photographs from Evers. Today, we are very excited to be able to provide this information to the German team working on that particular role of art historians during the Second World War.*

JW: Before we begin to discuss the research project that brought you to AAA, it would be of interest to hear about some of the collections you have consulted at other repositories or archives. Do you recall the interaction you had with the reference specialist at these archives or repositories? As a "novice" researcher, what were your expectations of the reference archivist?

TS: *I have primarily worked with architects' papers, namely the Albert Mayer Papers and the Julian H. Whittlesey Papers. Albert Mayer was the subject of my dissertation. He was a New York City based architect who traveled to India because of the Second World War where he became acquainted with India's Prime Minister Nehru. Nehru appointed him to build the new city of Chandigarh. Mayer provided the plan, according to which Le Corbusier built the new city of Chandigarh, which is how that story has been recorded in history, with Le Corbusier being Chandigarh's architect. My job was to tell Mayer's story and to do that I consulted Columbia University's Alumni Records, the Albert Mayer Papers at the New York Public Library, and his papers at Cornell University, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, the Carl A. Kroch Library. There I found the papers of several urban planners who had collaborated with Mayer in the U.S. on other projects. I studied the Henry S. Churchill, Charles Abrams, Warren Jay Vinton, Clarence S. Stein, Henry Wright, and Housing Study*

*Guild Papers. In all these I looked for correspondence with Mayer or references to Mayer. I also worked with the Albert Mayer and Julian H. Whittlesey Papers at the University of Wyoming, Archive of Contemporary History, American Heritage Center. Julian Whittlesey was also an architect and became Mayer's partner in the firm Mayer and Whittlesey. Together they built a few of the most important apartment buildings in New York City. Later the firm became Mayer, Whittlesey, & Glass. I therefore worked with Elliott M. Glass's (Milton Glass's son) private papers. These were similar to the archives at the Department of Buildings and the Municipal Archives of the City of New York, both of which I visited to find building permits etc. as they related to Mayer's career in New York City. I also looked at archival material from Mr. Glass's collection of architectural drawings, sketches, and plans.*

JW: You had mentioned to me that you sometimes found finding aids not sufficiently detailed. Can you elaborate a bit?

TS: *Finding aids are certainly useful but I never find them detailed enough. By that I mean, that I usually treat them as a point of departure. In the end, and because of the way I work, I like looking at everything because I have often found that the occasional letter has been filed with a lecture typescript and even though the connection of the two is clear and justified, if the letter is the item that interests me, I have no other way of finding it unless I look through everything. But this is primarily a personal preference. I want to be able to say that I have looked at everything, at least everything that is available to me.*

*I have found that study aids at the various archives I visited for the Albert Mayer project were limited in descriptions and details with the exception of the Archive of Contemporary History, American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming. There, the archivist provided me with a detailed list of their holdings, based on which I was able to order copies of the material that interested me. The archivist located the material for me, billed me for the number of pages and a few weeks later I received an entire box filled with photocopies of the requested material. This, in a way, was too easy. In addition to the material that Mayer had authored, and which had already been published, I needed to consult his unpublished lectures, a great number of talks given at universities and professional organizations, as well as his manuscripts of his published work. This unpublished material that had been deposited to the American Heritage Center interested me for its content and not its physical attributes. These were not artists' sketches that need to be examined in person. In my case of researching Mayer's written production, a photocopy, a microfilm, or a digital copy of the material would have served the purpose. This is the type of material an institution may choose to digitize to make it more accessible to researchers. While the expense of such undertaking could be tre-*

*mendous, the benefits far outweigh the costs, especially long-term since the collection can be more easily navigated.*

*At Cornell University, I arrived with a few names that interested me and the reference archivist suggested a few additional names that were related to the same period and projects. Therefore, while the study aids at Cornell were rudimentary, the reference archivist knew the collection and made sure I left only after I had checked everything pertinent to my project. Which is also to say, that without digitization one needs to rely on the archivist and hope that it is the same person who actually processed the papers, rather than a reference librarian who happens to be on duty, or a junior member of the staff who may have an overall understanding of the archives' holdings but not the intimate familiarity with the papers one acquires while processing the material.*

JW: While researchers have their own methods in consulting unfiled collections, the archivist still remains the mediator to the repository's collections. Although archivists provide many valuable sources and services, the preliminary reference interview remains an essential tool in helping our researchers – even though the researcher's preference may be to just “dig in” to the papers. We should not hesitate to review the basics, such as the archival concepts of provenance and original order or explain how to use a finding aid. In listening to Thomai discuss her research experiences, it may have been helpful if the archivist had explained that a finding aid is the key to locating materials in a collection. In taking these steps, archivists help researchers gain a clearer understanding of what to expect when consulting unfiled materials and thus, help them conduct their research more efficiently.

Regarding your research on Robert Rosenblum: You told me that you were just beginning your research when you had learned from Robert Rosenblum's widow, Jane that she had donated the final installment of his papers to AAA. How did you approach the papers, approximately 30 linear feet of raw materials?

TS: *I am working on a book about Robert Rosenblum, one of the most prominent art historians and critics of the 20th century. This project, namely a monograph on his work in art history with biographical elements as well, requires a variety of methodological approaches. The writer needs to thoroughly understand Rosenblum's approach to art historical writing and the methodologies that he employed. But one needs to also gain a very concrete picture of the subject's personality, his likes and dislikes, his habits and how all these informed both his scholarship and his personal relationships.*

*Contrary to what I said earlier about my experience with the Albert Mayer papers where I found the finding aids not descriptive enough for me, here I am taking a different approach. First of all, I have to say that it is a privilege to work at AAA's Research Center and to have been given permission to go through materials in their raw state. This is because even in their raw state the papers are pretty well organized. In fact, I am looking at Rosenblum's papers*

*the way he had them organized for himself in his drawers at home. Therefore, early on, I am finding his references, receipts, and lectures that relate to his activities as a young scholar in the 1960s, as a professor at Princeton University for example and the trips he took to look at paintings in France or England. I am also finding personal notes that connect him with other art historians and critics, such as Robert Herbert or John Russell.*

*Then, there are folders with his manuscripts and correspondence for each one of his projects, either book or exhibition, material that relates to his career as a scholar or curator. There are, of course, class rosters, slide lists, syllabi, and notes he took on his students' seminar presentations both at the Institute of Fine Arts and the Department of Art History at NYU downtown. Additionally, there are a couple of boxes with letters from his family and friends and his letters to his family. Finally, the financial information I have found interests me a lot because I intend to discuss his work as an art historian at a time when the profession of art history changed and when two things happened: First, people who were not independently wealthy entered the field. Rosenblum was one of them and early on he understood that he had to seek out assignments and change the perception people had of art historians, namely that perhaps they didn't need to eat. Secondly, this type of financial information interests me because I view Rosenblum as an entrepreneur within the field of art history and I am planning to discuss his method of approaching and completing assignments, regardless of whether these were books or lectures or shorter essays.*

JW: Thomai was fortunate that the Robert Rosenblum papers, though in a raw state, were organized in a manner that reflected the functions and activities of the creator. It is gratifying when researchers find materials that provide them with fresh insights into their subject. I have found that many researchers, such as Thomai, enjoy sharing their “discoveries” and this exchange expands the archivist's knowledge about the collection. Often, researchers provide background information that can be helpful when processing the collection.

TS: *Yes, this is absolutely correct. I very much enjoy getting the occasional question from you: “So, did you find anything exciting today?” While the random surprise does not come up every day, just the volume of this particular collection warrants some unexpected findings. And the only person who can actually discover these things is the researcher because the archivist cannot possibly have the time to go through every single page of the collection. Most of the material that is unexpected has to do with material culture, i.e. a ticket stub from the 1950s, a magazine ad from the 1960s, newspaper columns of a different era and a different social context. These are all delights for the researcher and certainly add to the value of the material archived. I cannot imagine digitizing every single airplane ticket but thinking about this material as context within which Rosenblum's scholarship developed is extremely valuable. Finally, there are all the otherwise trivial documents that have been preserved along with Rosenblum's financial records, for*

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*example restaurant receipts from his trips to London or Paris. For a biographer, this is very important information because it adds to the verisimilitude and accuracy of the story to be told.*

JW: Most scholars looking at primary materials experience Thomai's delight in handling the actual item, whether it is a ticket stub or an archival newspaper clipping. There are materials within a collection that may not be scanned for a variety of reasons, including minimal research value, privacy and ethical issues, copyright concerns, though AAA's overall goal is to digitize most of the material in a collection.

Last, AAA's Terra Foundation for Digital Collections has been actively digitizing our finding aids, collections, transcripts of oral history interviews—providing global access to our users. As an individual who has benefited and taken pleasure in consulting original collections, what is your view of accessing digitized collections?

TS: *Digitized collections are a "dream come true" for researchers. In most cases, they eliminate additional, and oftentimes steep, expenses relating to travel and accommodations for the researcher who is visiting the collection. Digital records offer unlimited access to content at no cost to scholars. This encourages the initiation of new research projects that would have been deemed too costly*

*otherwise. It also incentivizes research in areas that have remained unexplored just because researchers were unaware that the material existed. Having said that, I would also like to add that my training in art history has instilled in me a great yearning to study the physical object in real life and derive conclusions from its physical state and materiality. For a project like the one I am working on now, Rosenblum's biography, I would still want to examine the original material, considering that this would be made available to me after digitization. There is simply a different type of information the researcher acquires from looking exclusively at content (in print or digital format) than from looking at both content and physical object, because the latter provides context. In Rosenblum's archives one finds a variety of pamphlets, exhibition announcements, single issues of popular magazine titles but also airplane tickets, restaurant receipts, all of which are items that do not speak of Rosenblum's work but do inform the researcher about his personal tastes and preferences in art as in life. They also document material culture of a certain period, for example the 1960s or 1970s. AAA's Terra Foundation Center for Digital Collections is providing a service of tremendous value and impact on scholarship. I just hope that scholars will maintain their privilege in getting permission to visit archival collections and handle the material in its raw form.*

## Researching in Institutional Archives: A Conversation Between Jeannette Redensek and Francine Snyder

Francine Snyder (FS): Thank you Joy and Thomai. Reflecting on your discussion of research in a manuscript repository makes me reconsider access and reference services at the Guggenheim Museum Archives. In particular, I question: Is the Guggenheim Museum Archives' reference system adequate and how are our collections perceived by researchers? To address these questions, I've invited Jeannette Redensek, catalogue raisonné researcher at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation for an open discussion on research successes and trials at the Guggenheim and other institutional archives.

Jeannette, first and foremost, I'd like to thank you for having this conversation. Our previous discussions have been thought-provoking and I'm glad to bring it to a larger audience.

I'd like to start by asking you, as a seasoned art historian and most recently the catalogue raisonné researcher at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, what are your basic expectations when researching in institutional archives – especially as you've visited different archives. If helpful, include a little background on your current research.

Jeannette Redensek (JR): *To say that research for a catalogue raisonné is archive-intensive is an understatement: a catalogue raisonné is an archive of the archives. It is a compendium of an artist's complete life-time production. While every manner of art historical research might sift through artists' records in search of biographical*

*information, clues to relationships, and hints of budding ideas, the catalogue raisonné seeks to map the history of objects through time – when an artwork was made, how it was made, why it was made, and everywhere it ever went, from the hour of conception to the present day. As such the catalogue raisonné becomes a précis of studio notebooks, shipping lists, exhibition catalogues, sales receipts, correspondence with curators, gallerists and collectors, and the artist's own notes on methods and materials. This is not to claim some superior status for the character of catalogue raisonné research, but rather to frame properly its complete and utter reliance on archives.*

*My own research concerns the paintings of Josef Albers (1888-1976), a German-born artist and teacher who had been associated with the Bauhaus school of design in the 1920s and early 1930s. He emigrated to the United States in 1933, and taught in the experimental, interdisciplinary program of Black Mountain College in North Carolina until 1949. He then went on to become a professor at Yale University. As might be expected, with such a peripatetic artist, the archival materials are widely dispersed, and even more so as Albers' career intersects with a number of art historical developments, from the rhizomatic diaspora of European modern artists in the 1930s to the expansion of modern art as an international business in the post-war period. The Albers catalogue research is, therefore, international in scope, and relies on archives large and small, beginning with the holdings of the Albers*

*Foundation itself, which preserves the papers of Josef Albers and his wife, artist and weaver Anni Albers. We are using numerous gallery and museum archives, libraries, and the large, national repositories, such as the Archives of American Art, ZADIK in Cologne (Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels), and the INHA in Paris (Institut national d'histoire de l'art). The character of catalogue raisonné research means we also look to sources less visited by art historians, such as court and probate records, and government holdings such as the archives of departments of state in the United States and Europe, which document the role of art as a tool of diplomacy in the modern era.*

FS: As mentioned a moment ago, our institutional repository uses the principle of provenance as its organizational arrangement. As Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland explains “the principle of provenance has two components: records of the same provenance should not be mixed with those of a different provenance, and the archivist should maintain the original order in which the records were created and kept.”<sup>2</sup> This principle was developed from a concern for objectivity in original source materials. Archivists wanted the records to be able to establish what really took place and, to do that, they felt that the records should be maintained in their original order, not rearranged. To this day, original order remains a fundamental principle of archives, preserving “existing relationships and evidential significance that can be inferred from the context of the records.”<sup>3</sup> This means that in most institutional archives, artists’ records will remain within the original collection of the curator, director, or board member.

When we spoke earlier, I was surprised to learn that these principles are not widely known outside of the archives community. Originally I was going to ask you: What is your understanding of this principle and how do you navigate it? However, I’d like to change this to, how does knowing this principle change how you will conduct future research into artists’ records or understanding where artists’ records live within collections? What are your expectations of an institutional archives?

JR: *In approaching institutional archives, the first hope is that the institution has an archive, that it is kept in reasonable order, that there is someone at the organization familiar with the holdings, and that the collections are accessible to qualified researchers. I would not take any of these things for granted. There are many long-established organizations that have neglected their histories. They have lost their records, stashed them deeply in a cold warehouse, or just left them moldering in the basement. And even where an organization has preserved its records, when funding is short, staffing for research resources is often among the first programs to take a hit.*

*While I know that today there are standardized practices of professional archival organization, the fact is that every collection is unique in its form and extent. Collections shadow the temporal course of the artist’s life or the institution’s history. Particularly in the case of older archives, a collection can take on a geological aspect, with superimposed layers of cataloguing systems, each stratum laid down in a different climate of standardization. One of the great joys of doing historical research is unraveling the puzzle of an archive’s arrangement. The organization of knowledge is also a part of the history of knowledge.*

*Because there is such variety in the organization of institutional archives, I have learned to read more completely through the archive’s directories and finding aids, and to look deeper than mere keyword searches. I have learned to look at related records within certain time periods and to bracket dates more broadly, to search across museum or university departments, across sequential museum directorships or curatorships, to take the time to look through what might on first glance have seemed secondary and tertiary priorities. As a result, with accumulating experience in archives, generally, I have learned to always, always read through as much material as possible.*

*This kind of research would be unthinkable, undoable, without the assistance of someone who knows the collections well. There is a need for conversations or correspondence with the archivist at at least two points in the research process: when the materials are first requested, and at a later point, midway in the research. What am I finding? What and I not finding? Where else should I be looking? This is a research protocol that, given the opportunity, one would follow in any archive. But in the mutable, even eccentric world of institutional archives, it is a necessity.*

FS: In an earlier conversation, you spoke of the joy of serendipity in research and related this to the luxury of time – and even respect of the archivist’s time – to be able to make discoveries. This made me think that, as an archivist, making artists’ records accessible does take a quantifiable amount of time. We balance our time by constantly making decisions on the levels of processing within our collections. We weigh research value, historical importance, and the focuses of our collections and missions of our institutions. Certain series or subseries, such as artists’ correspondence, are prioritized and, as you would imagine, receive detailed indexing. However, not all artists’ records are in areas of the collection that are this clean-cut. Artists’ records have been found in financial records and these sections are often selected for minimal processing, which means artists are not often listed. To minimally process a part of a collection is a real decision; the more minimally we process a collection, the less time it takes – and the more quickly we move on to new collections, making more records accessible. When

<sup>2</sup> Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, *Enduring Paradigm, New Opportunities: the Value of the Archival Perspective in the Digital Environment* (Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2000), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Pearce-Moses, Richard, “Original Order,” in *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005. Accessed March 8, 2012 [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=69](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=69)

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we decide to minimally process a collection, we make an intellectual decision to place the burden of time and discovery on the researcher.

Does a minimally processed or unprocessed collection appeal or unnerve you? What do you see as the positives and negatives of these collections?

JR: *Doing extensive research in an unprocessed or minimally processed archival collection can be exhausting, but it can also offer opportunities. If you are the first person looking through a corpus of uncatalogued primary material, it means you have been given an extraordinary privilege. You are a respectable researcher, a trusted historian. With extraordinary privilege comes extraordinary responsibility: Presuming you publish your findings, everyone who reads through that collection after you will filter their findings through the narratives you have fashioned.*

*But even for more quotidian researchers like me, unprocessed and minimally processed archival collections offer intellectual adventure. There is a wonderful serendipity to archival research, and this serendipity comes to the forefront in an uncatalogued collection. One begins to create new knowledge, not from information pre-filtered through a search algorithm, or subject headings of the Library of Congress, but through the perception of novel proximities and unexpected juxtapositions. Research in such an open (uncatalogued) collection assumes an enormous luxury of time. While I present here a romanticized scenario, the fact is that research in an unprocessed archives collection is also rife with dead-ends, lacunae, and frustration.*

FS: What innovative ways have you seen archives assist in reference and research by creating additional access points to artists' records across multiple collections? How have these worked or not worked?

JR: *Cataloguing innovations are not new, and belong not only to the digital age. I mentioned earlier the stratigraphic character of older institutional archives. Anyone who has spent time in older archives or libraries, for instance, in the state libraries of Europe, has experienced the challenge of parallel and staggered cataloguing systems, each one an artifact of political and ideological change, each one in its own way an innovation in the organization of knowledge. I have spent a lot of time doing research in German archives and libraries, where the layers of imperial rule and the recombination of two different political regimes in recent history have produced labyrinthine systems of organization. Another of the awe-inspiring cataloguing configurations I have encountered is that of the Freie Universität Berlin, where books are catalogued and shelved in the order by which they were acquired. I know this is not a unique system, but because the library has open-access shelves, the "novel proximities and unexpected juxtapositions" defy all comprehension.*

*In current parlance and practice, "innovation" also betokens a new regime, and a new understanding of the categories of knowl-*

*edge, and a new assumption about whom knowledge is for. The accommodation of digital technology has long been borne on the promise of democratization. And I believe there is a truth to this. But I am skeptical that about the digitization of paper archives as an end in itself. I am skeptical about efficiency of access as an ultimate value in creating historical understanding. Let me explain by contrasting two conceptions of the archive, its makers, and its users.*

*First, the archive of efficiency: Founded in 1992, the Zentralarchiv des international Kunsthandels in Cologne, Germany, (ZADIK) is a relatively new and still growing archive, dedicated to preserving the records of galleries, artists, critics, and collectors. ZADIK is building indexes that locate the incidence of an artist's name across every file and every collection in their domain. This is essentially a keyword search, a cataloguing method that is also used by the Archives of American Art. It would seem to be efficient, but it has its drawbacks. If I am researching the relationship between Josef Albers and the gallery XYZ, I am presented only with those gallery files where the name of Josef Albers appears. One gets the facts, but a lot of connective tissue is missing. The cataloguing system has foreshortened my inquiry, the archivist has prefiltered my findings. This is, of course, a research-relations issue as much as an archival organization issue. And I want to emphasize that ZADIK is a wonderful archive, with a sense of dedication and excitement about history and its objects. It is an archive that is still experimenting with the best forms in which to hold and use the documents of which it is master.*

*Let me contrast the archive of efficiency with another model, the archive of complexity. Among the most developed examples of obduracy in archival form and use is the "Open Archive" created by the artist Sigrid Sigurdsson (born 1943 in Oslo). At the Karl-Ernst-Osthaus-Museum in Hagen, Germany, Sigurdsson in 1988 created an installation, "Die Architektur der Erinnerung" (Architecture of Memory). The installation is still in place. It comprises a room lined with dark, heavy, book-filled wooden shelves, and vitrines filled with objects, letters, and documents of all kinds, pertaining to history and especially to Germany under National Socialism. A quiet, dark, and somber mood permeates the room. Among the most interesting elements in this archive are 800 travel diaries – heavy ledger-scaled volumes that visitors check out and take home, and into which they are asked to write the stories of their families and communities during the wars of the 20th century. There are a number of such social-history-from-below archives underway today. They represent an approach to innovation and democratization that rests on the far end of the spectrum from computerization. What especially impresses me about Sigurdsson's project is its palpable sense of history as unfolding and unending, and its profound feeling for historical objects as condensers of lived experience.*

FS: The idea of indexed artists' records throughout collections is, without argument, fabulous and hopefully in all of our futures with the development of Encoded Archival Context - Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (more commonly

known as EAC-CPF). However, your observation that there can be drawbacks with indexing is true. The challenge is to incorporate the context surrounding artists' records into the functionality of these indexing tools. Without this, we are not properly solving the problem.

So looking even more broadly, if collections were digitized, would this be an adequate substitute for reference assistance and visiting the archives? What would change?

JR: *What if all collections were digitized and the researcher no longer needed the guiding hand of the archivist? Well, the life of the researcher would certainly be much less interesting. I love digitized records. I love digitized books. I love that I can sit at my desk in rural Bethany, Connecticut, and page through the entirety of a digitally scanned, beautifully detailed botanical treatise at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany, 4000 miles away.*

*But as might be surmised by my interest in old ledgers and stratigraphic cataloguing systems, I think real historical understanding – the narrative beyond the facts themselves – requires the archive as a physical entity. The primary materials of an archive are always a revelation. They carry a wealth of extra-linguistic information – tactile, olfactory, age-value. The specificity of inks and pencil strokes, the weights of papers, the texture and smell of printing technologies, the traces of wear and finger oils, the scraps of paper tucked decisively between two pages. This is the kind of information that gives words and pictures a true context.*

*Research takes time, and the narratives of history are shaped by the resistance of the records. There are two ethics of history writing that I believe can only come with time spent in the physical archive: humility and empathy. Humility because the physical experience of working through the breadth and depth of an archive enforces a sense of proportion between one's own experience and the immensity of past. The concept of empathy as an ethic of historical understanding was articulated by the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), and articulated in a much more sophisticated manner than I am using it here. He contended that writing history required a kind of emotional and intellectual projection, an imagination of the past, wherein historical actors moved as fallible humans who had no idea of how the story might end.*

FS: It is not always clear to researchers that when archivists make decisions to digitize records, it is not as a replacement but as a surrogate. As surrogates, digitized collections are extremely valuable as an additional access point, and can often replace the need to travel to see the original. However, the digital version can also be seen as a gateway to the physical, not as the end of the investigation.<sup>4</sup> When needed, the original collection will be in the archives waiting to be read.

## Conclusion

Access to archival collections is rapidly changing. Collections are now available to researchers in various states of arrangement, from fully processed to minimally processed to digitized surrogates, and, as such, the archivist's role has become more flexible when responding to researcher needs. While researchers have become more self-reliant, archivists continue to serve as mediators, clearing the path so that users can see the trees from the forest. We have learned from today's discussion that conversations between archivists and scholars are still important. Ascertaining the art historian's expectations, what he or she hopes to find when consulting the original materials, allows archivists to continue to provide maximum and optimum access to information. In taking these steps, archivists and users are forming collaborative relationships, sharing their knowledge of the collections, and thus making the reference transaction mutually rewarding for both parties.

<sup>4</sup> Audience questions brought up the issue of prioritizing resources for digitization of collections vs. the management of born-digital collections – if time and money would be better spent on assuring the longevity digitally born collections instead of digitizing materials we already had in analog form. To me, they are two different management processes. Born-digital collections are originals and should be prioritized, cared for, and valued as original collections. Digitized collections or digital reproductions of a collection are just that: reproductions. As such, digitizing should be prioritized and valued as any access project is prioritized and valued. The two need not conflict.

## SESSION 3

# Digital Solutions: Initiating Digital Projects to Document Artists' Work, Records, and Processes

## Introduction

Jenny Swadosh, Associate Archivist, Kellen Design Archives, The New School

As the demand for online documentation of artists' activity grows, institutional repositories are in a unique position to partner with artists in preserving and making accessible their records. The two papers in this session document the aid that information professionals have provided to artists -- a population not known for its archival and organizational management skills. Susan Craig and Liz Kowalchuk outline the University of Kansas's pilot project involving the inclusion of faculty artists in the university's digital repository, KU ScholarWorks. In "Using an Institutional Repository to Archive Artists' Work," Craig and Kowalchuk demonstrate their findings when assessing the needs of the practicing artist who occupies the dual roles of teacher and faculty member.

In "Artists' Records in the Art Space," Ryan Evans describes his work for *Archive in Progress*, a digitization project initiated by White Columns cooperative artists' space to provide item-level online access to previously inaccessible archival holdings. *Archive in Progress*, like KU Scholarworks, directly serves the artist community, as well as traditional and historically nontraditional researchers, while overcoming institutional staffing and infrastructure limitations. Together these papers present a strong case for recognizing the benefits of providing digital access to artists' records, understanding and preserving in an online environment the context in which artists' records are created, and acknowledging the needs and concerns of the communities that generate these records.

## Presentation Abstract:

### Using an Institutional Repository as an Archive of Artists' Work

Susan Craig and Elizabeth Kowalchuk, University of Kansas

Many artists find keeping track of the various records associated with professional careers incompatible with their creative natures. Maintaining records of exhibitions and sales, as well as documenting all the details of when, where, and how work is produced, can be time-consuming yet necessary. Although many artists create and maintain websites to show current work while also showing publicity and earlier images, balancing the demands of art making and business can be challenging. Artists working within university settings may face additional challenges as they balance the institutional requirements to record not only creative work but also accomplishments in teaching and service. To address this trifecta of needs (artwork, teaching, service), the University of Kansas Libraries and the School of the Arts are exploring having fine art faculty use our digital

institutional repository, KU ScholarWorks, to create a permanent, accessible record of arts faculty work. Currently, ScholarWorks makes accessible articles, preprint, texts of lectures, reports, monographs, conference papers, and other text-based information. We have been exploring how this system might be used to provide access to images and other media to document faculty work in visual art, theater, dance, and other creative fields. We focus here on the results of artist focus group discussions and a pilot project that involved several faculty who explored how digital storage might support recording, keeping, and disseminating artistic activities. This project has potential both to maintain the professional careers of artists and to provide a wider array of information to the public.

## Artists' Records in the Art Space

Ryan Evans, Archivist, White Columns

Today I wanted to discuss the open source digitization effort that I initiated as Archivist and Curatorial Associate at White Columns. After giving you some background information about the organization I will tell you about some unique issues surrounding items in the archive, followed by how I approached finding a digital solution for presenting the White Columns archive on the Internet.

White Columns was founded in 1970 by artists Jeffrey Lew and Gordon Matta-Clark under its original name 112 Greene Street/112 Workshop, as a cooperative artist-run space with relatively little infrastructure in the early years. Exhibition activities were closely tied to ephemeral art practices such as performance art, process art, conceptual art, and dance, which relied on faithful documentation to ensure future understanding and communication of those works. Later on, especially into the 1980s, the gallery became more institutionalized as it secured funding sources. However, it continued to remain dedicated to providing significant exposure to emerging and underrepresented artists, which it continues to do to this day. Especially through the White Room exhibition series—in which an artist is typically given carte blanche to realize his or her first solo exhibition in a New York Gallery—artists including John Currin, Marilyn Minter, and Glenn Ligon have succeeded in producing breakthrough, iconic projects. In addition to the typical gallery program, screenings, performances, and panel discussions have also taken place regularly throughout the years.

The archives of a highly influential, artist-centric, and forward-thinking organization such as White Columns can be full of artists' records including primary source or rare documents. These documents can range from preparatory sketches or proposals for an exhibition or performance to small independent artists' publications and correspondence, or early biographies and artist statements. Generally throughout contemporary art history, emerging artists have not done a sufficient job at archiving their own practices and activities. The archives of an alternative art space such as White Columns, therefore, is often an obvious reference source for scholars, curators, and art dealers in reconstructing these early histories.

While artists' records in general provide immeasurable insight into an artist's practice and career, such records within an art space are likely to communicate another level of relationships relative to the projects or exhibitions an artist was working on, as well as with the personalities and operations of the partnering institution. In addition to artists' records in the expected sense of the term, institutional traces such as invitations, exhibition schedules, posters, and documentation can also contribute to a

richer interpretation of the art realized there.

Proposing a digital solution for me was a timely response to what I perceived as a growing demand for primary source documents related to exhibition histories. The products of this zeitgeist of research focusing on artists' records and early exhibition histories can be seen most tangibly in the increased amount of archival citations in academic work. Art historian Liz Kotz said recently regarding this trend:

The generation of contemporary art historians that I am a part of, people who completed their dissertations since the early 1990s, were part of a larger return to archival and historical methods. Because we had not lived through the legendary postwar art movements so many of us were writing on - Fluxus, Minimalism, Happenings, Conceptual Art, and so forth - it was almost inevitable that we would take up a kind of historical research that had partly been bypassed or sidelined in, say, the more critically and theoretically-driven art criticism of the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the academic intrigue surrounding artists' records and exhibition archives, the past few years have seen a resurgence of exhibitions and publications focused on these types of materials. In 2009 White Columns celebrated its fortieth year of continuous operation since its founding in 1970. To commemorate this, the curators organized a show called *40 Years/40 Projects*, which focused on one exhibition, event, or project that took place at the gallery for each of its forty years, represented by a combination of archival materials and original artwork. Last year in a similar spirit LACE, an influential alternative space in Los Angeles published *LACE: Living the archive*, which reproduces, alongside contributors' essays, thirty years worth of artist documents and exhibitions ephemera, as well as critical texts by artists and curators published at LACE.

As archivist at White Columns I first noticed this appetite for artists' records, and exhibition archives in general, in the steady flow of requests by researchers to access the organization's exhibition archive. Inquiries came from researchers ranging from practicing artists to doctoral students, gallery directors, and curators, as well as support staff at museums and other organizations. The archives of an art space can function as a resource for artists who have not yet developed a system for archiving their own activities. Artists or their studios and assistants would regularly contact White Columns for access to images, checklists, and other information pertaining to their own activities at the gallery. Another logical use of this kind of archives is as

<sup>1</sup> Stakenas, C. A., Carlson, L., & Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (Gallery). (2010). *LACE: Living the archive*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions., p.5.

## SESSION 3

a resource for checking dates and other details related to activities that occurred at the art space, which are important in the compilation of artists' biographies for retrospective exhibitions. Images lying deep in the archives are also often requested for reproduction in publications.

In most cases, however, beyond looking for something in particular, researchers held a general interest in what unexpected items *might* be included in the exhibition archives: perhaps documentation that diverged from or contributed something new to the published past of an artist's career. The provision of easy access to these materials was necessary, as their potential uses were becoming unpredictable. Consulting the physical archives for each of these inquiries, and returning a digital copy of the objects and information contained within, was impractical to say the least.

Historically, although materials in the White Columns archives have been retained and distributed in a predictable and logical manner, both description and access posed major obstacles to research. Because the White Columns archives had never passed through a traditional repository and been described with a proper finding aid, it was nearly impossible to guide researchers beyond becoming very familiar with the forty-year exhibition history and making educated guesses. Reflecting on the unpredictability of navigating an alternative art space's archives in her book *Alternative Art New York* Julie Ault said:

Because many alternative initiatives are ad hoc, time-based, or anti-institutional, documentation is frequently fugitive...In some cases, material has been saved but remains unorganized due to lack of money, labor, energy, or interest. In still other cases, histories and data have been compiled and packaged. What becomes history is to some degree determined by what is archived.<sup>2</sup>

Given the underprocessed status of the White Columns archives, supervised access to materials was always necessary and required coordination with one of the few staff members' already varied schedules. Furthermore, without a reading room and designated staff to field questions and make appointments with researchers, it always seemed that it was impossible to allow for adequate exposure and access for these materials. It also seemed that overhandling of materials was occurring as a result of lack of navigability.

When envisioning what a proper digital archives for White Columns might look like, these practical concerns were always at the forefront. Materials needed to be organized in a meaningful manner to allow for item-level access. However, it was important to preserve the context of the materials as archival entities. Ideally the treatment of these materials in a digital resource would balance between providing a catalogue and adequately reflecting the object's relationship to the original arrangement of the archives. Furthermore, as with any effective digitization effort, a key objective was to provide both access- and preservation-quality imaging of the archival objects. It became clear to me early on that an open source archival database solution was best suited for communicating the contents of the White Columns archives to researchers.

After researching a few open source solutions that have been used to power similar projects I settled on Collective Access. As I looked toward future applications of the project, Collective Access was of interest because it supports storage of a variety of different media types including images, PDF, and audio and video files. The main web skills required to implement Collective Access are knowledge of HTML as well as PHP, which both support the requisite MySQL database. Collective Access as a platform is very flexible in terms of web design as well as its ability to be configured to support a wide variety of cataloging and metadata standards. Its default cataloging schema is Dublin Core, which appeared to support sufficient access to the materials for our purposes. Another concern would be in making this addition to the organization's main website fairly seamless in terms of design. Collective Access's inherent flexibility allowed for this as well.

The first step in utilizing Collective Access was to define a metadata profile based on the different types of objects and other archival materials that would be cataloged in the system. The typical work flow for cataloging an object in Collective Access is to define a related entity such as artist or organizer, then relate those entities to exhibitions or program series, and finally to catalog the digitized object in relation to those entities and programs. Controlled terms such as individual names allow for faceted searches by a number of different relationships inherent in the archival objects including object type, publication, or the name of an artist or exhibition. These controlled terms can be further enhanced to incorporate other vocabularies, such as the Library of Congress subject headings.

<sup>2</sup> Ault, J., Social Text Collective., & Drawing Center (New York, N.Y.). (2002). *Alternative art, New York, 1965-1985: A cultural politics book for the Social Text Collective*. New York: Drawing Center., p.1-2.

The goal for the White Columns digital archives, now called Archive in Progress, was to allow for successful discovery of the items in the archives with a minimum of intervention by the user. The simple process has allowed for much of the digitization and cataloging to be accomplished by interns over the past two years. New content continues to be added on a regular basis, coming closer to a true reflection of what is in the physical archives. One of the greatest benefits is that although the Archive in Progress is just one tab on the White Columns website, Internet keyword searches such as those through Google produce the same results as a local query. This, as we know, is one of the key advantages to publishing finding aids in encoded archival description (EAD) on the Internet. Working with tools including EAD documents, we can use the Internet to make researchers aware of primary source documents without requiring that they have specialized knowledge about the organization of archival collections.

## SESSION 4

# Art, Artifact, Artist's Record: Processing and Managing Collections

## Introduction

Rachel Jirka, Assistant to the Archivist, College of Staten Island, City University of New York

Artists' records often present unique challenges during arrangement and description. The ambiguous relationships forged among career management, artistic expression, and personal life result in a complex arrangement of archival material that often does not conform to the expectations of archival professionals. The distinction between record and artwork can be blurred, leaving the archivist to determine the nature of the material. In addition, archivists are charged with determining the arrangement of artists' records; however, many may find that arrangement standards may not apply due to the singular nature of the records. The case studies in this session are based on quotidian processing activities, and address the issues faced by processing archivists of such collections.

## Unearthing Treasures: Identifying Original Artists' Records in an Art Library

Sally Brazil, Chief, Archives and Records Management, The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library

The Frick Art Reference Library, one of New York City's treasures and one of the great art libraries in the world, contains many resources on the lives and work of artists. Monographs, photoarchives, and electronic databases are all available, and the majority of the library's researchers consult these materials. However, buried within the expected resources are nuggets of primary source materials that also document the lives of artists. These records are now part of the archival holdings of The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library (<http://www.frick.org/archives/index.htm>). The Archives Department, founded in 1997, oversees the institutional archives of both The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library, manuscript collections located at the library, and the Frick family papers on deposit from the Helen Clay Frick Foundation. This presentation is a brief overview of the library's artists' records holdings, the methods by which they have come to us, and what is being done to bring these treasures to light.

Although the Frick Art Reference Library did not deliberately collect records of artists, over the years such records have arrived by gift and purchase. Original correspondence, photographs, sketchbooks, and diaries often arrived as part of a larger gift of research or photographs to the library (primarily from the 1920s to 1940s from artists, critics, dealers, and researchers), were contained in larger collections such as the Frick family papers, or were offered to the library in direct response to written solicitations from the Library's staff. The Archives Department staff has systematically walked the library stack areas (and continues to do so), looking for uncatalogued records considered either outside of the collecting scope of the library or useful for background only, as well as identified manuscript materials catalogued as book material that are then re-designated as archival holdings. Currently, the Archives Department has no

acquisitions budget, and there are no plans to expand the scope of collecting activities now to include artists' archives.

Helen Clay Frick (1888-1984), the library's founder and principal benefactor, organized her library in 1920 with specific goals in mind. Collecting the papers of artists, especially living ones, was not part of her collecting policy, which was to document the history of Western art from the fourth century to the mid-twentieth century. From its founding, however, the library's mission included acquiring photographs of works of art. As part of a broad effort to collect photographs, the library staff contacted painters directly in 1925 and 1926, and in 1931 letters went to sculptors, requesting examples of an artist's best or preferred work for inclusion in the photoarchives. As a result of the systematic solicitations, the library received many photographs directly from artists, often accompanied by letters explaining their selections for inclusion as well as biographical details. The photographs were incorporated into the photoarchives holdings and the accompanying correspondence and biographical materials were retained in administrative files or, in some cases, catalogued separately with the book materials.

Manuscript gifts have come to us via individual donors. As a start, the earliest item in the archives that is in an artist's hand dates from 1596: a note from Federigo Barocci (1528-1612), part of a 1952 gift of twelve unrelated artists' letters. This 1952 gift of artists' correspondence from Michael Engel included correspondence from Cecilia Beaux, Adolphe Bouguereau, Jean Leon Gerome, Jean Louis Meissonnier, Sir John Millais, Michael Munkascy and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. The gift can be found in the Artists' Correspondence Collection, The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

Gifts have also come through organizations such as the College Art Association, which donated the background re-

search generated in the course of preparing the Index to Twentieth-Century Artists (1933-1937. <http://arcade.nyarc.org/record=b298817-S6>); and the Art Students League, whose numerous gifts of photographs have included photographs of artists. The Archives Department has created an artificial collection that is regularly added to with images culled from various sources. The images date from the 1800s to the 1970s, and range from formal portraits to more casual photographs of artists at work (Images of Artists Collection. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives).

Both The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library house works of art commissioned by Miss Frick and The Frick Collection trustees as part of the construction and decoration of both buildings and as commemorative works in honor of Mr. Frick. The back and forth between artist and patron is represented in the archival records of three “works for hire.”

One example concerns a commission for the library. The records in the archives holdings document the commissioning, execution and delivery of the fresco prepared by Nicholas Lochoff (1872-1948) for the library’s main reading room. It is a copy, painted 1928-1930, of a fresco by Pietro Lorenzetti of the Madonna and Child, Saint Francis, and Saint John located in Sienna. (The original fourteenth-century fresco is located in the Lower Chapel of the Church of San Francisco in Assisi.) Among the several letters in the files from Lochoff, many of them discuss his painting technique, working conditions, and hopes for the sale of his other works (Helen Clay Frick Papers, Series: Art Files. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library).

Miss Frick hired artists on more than one occasion to depict her father posthumously, with varying degrees of satisfaction. The sculptor Malvina Hoffman (1887-1966) enjoyed a long personal and professional friendship with Miss Frick. Miss Frick and Malvina Hoffman may have met through their mutual involvement in Red Cross activities during World War I. (Miss Frick volunteered her time and considerable financial resources to the Red Cross efforts both in France and in the United States during World War I.) She asked the artist to sculpt a posthumous bust of her father (now in The Frick Collection) and also to consider sculpting a lunette over the new library’s entrance. The 1937 lunette contract signed by the artist, but not countersigned, is located in the archives (Malvina Hoffman contract, 1937. Helen Clay Frick Correspondence. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives). The contract was never executed and today the library lunette remains unadorned. In the archives there is film footage, which has been digitized courtesy of the Helen Clay Frick Foundation, of Miss Frick and Malvina Hoffman together during the 1920s and in 1940.

The example of Sir Gerald Kelly (1879-1972) and his posthumous portraits of Mr. Frick is one in which Miss Frick was less than satisfied. The written record consists for the most part

of disagreements between Miss Frick and the artist over the work and payment for it, including a three page handwritten plea in 1925 from the artist to Miss Frick requesting payment of \$50,000 for the time lost in coming to America to paint and cooling his heels, turning down other commissions, and so forth, as he devoted his attention to Miss Frick (letter from Sir Gerald Kelly to Helen Clay Frick, 15 May 1925. Helen Clay Frick Papers, Series: Art Files. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives). Unfortunately, she didn’t like his work, but after much back and forth, she did pay him. One of his Frick paintings hangs in the library reading room today.

Additional artists’ records, as examples of the artist and patron relationship, also surface in the personal papers of Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) and Helen Clay Frick. The Frick family archives on deposit from the Helen Clay Frick Foundation contain a number of examples of Mr. Frick’s connection to contemporary artists. In his several trips to Europe, he visited artists’ studios, usually accompanied by art dealers and his family. He also purchased or commissioned paintings directly from artists. In the Helen Clay Frick Foundation archives, Theobald Chartran (1849-1907) is represented (among other records in the archives) in a volume of postcards compiled by Miss Frick (postcard from Henry Clay Frick to Helen Clay Frick, 13 August 1904. In postcard album from European trip, 1904. Henry Clay Frick Papers, Series: Travel. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library). One postcard from Switzerland dates from 1904 and is from Mr. Frick to Miss Frick, after Mr. Frick dined with several artists, all of whom, including Chartran, signed the postcard. Chartran’s portrait of Miss Frick, dated 1905, is located at the Frick Art & Historical Center in Pittsburgh.

Another letter in the family archives, written from Jules Breton (1827-1906) to Mr. Frick in 1895 after a visit to his studio in France, is included in a volume of bills, receipts, and correspondence concerning Mr. Frick’s art purchases, entitled Bill Book #1 (Henry Clay Frick Papers, Series I: Art Files. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives). In this letter the artist describes his painting, *The Last Gleanings*, and his feelings about it to Mr. Frick. He notes “This is the hour which has always moved me most, and which I have all my life tried to express. I believe I have never succeeded better than in your painting.” (Letter from Jules Breton to Henry Clay Frick, 21 [September or November] 1895. Bill Book No. 1, page 41. Henry Clay Frick Papers, Series: Art Files. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library.) At the time Mr. Frick purchased the painting, it was the most he had spent on a work of art: \$14,000. He sold the painting in 1907 back to Knoedler & Co. for \$25,000 and put it towards his purchase of Rembrandt’s *Self-Portrait*, a painting that he acknowledged as one of his favorites (invoice from M. Knoedler & Co., 1895. Bill Book No. 1, page 3. Henry Clay Frick Papers, Series: Art Files. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives).

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Artists whose works the Fricks purchased also sent their photographs to the Fricks. Autographed cartes de visite were sent by Jacob Maris (1837-1899) and Josef Israels (1824-1911), among others. Mr. Frick purchased six paintings from Maris, one of which, *The Bridge* remains in the holdings of The Frick Collection (*The Bridge*, 1885, by Jacob Maris. Purchased by Henry Clay Frick in 1906, returned in 1908; repurchased in 1914. The Frick Collection. [http://collections.frick.org/view/objects/asitem/items\\$0040:116](http://collections.frick.org/view/objects/asitem/items$0040:116)) and four from Israels of which he ultimately kept one, *Mother and Child*, still owned by the Frick family.

In Miss Frick's attempts to keep the provenance records for her family's paintings up to date, she contacted artists from whom her father had purchased paintings. She then gave their letters to the library to augment the records here. Artists represented include George Bellows (1882-1925,) from whom Mr. Frick purchased *Docks in Winter* in 1918, which is now in a private collection. Bellows sent a letter in 1921 to Miss Frick in which he notes that he painted the picture in 1911 at a location by the East River docks at about E. 19th Street (George Bellows letter to Helen Clay Frick, 1921. Helen Clay Frick Artwork Files. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives). Another artist, John W. Beatty (1851-1924), who was also the first director of the Carnegie Museum (1896-1922), corresponded with Miss Frick in 1921. Mr. Frick had purchased Beatty's *Harvest Scene* (also called *The Potato Field*) in 1895. The letter in the archives was solicited by Miss Frick as part of preparatory work for a catalogue of works located at Prides Crossing, the Frick family summer estate in Eagle Rock, Massachusetts. It provides the location of the painting, the year it was painted, and other information (John W. Beatty to Helen Clay Frick, 1921. Helen Clay Frick Artwork Files. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives). The painting is located at the Frick Art & Historical Center.

Miss Frick's personal artistic interests were a primary reason for the presence of original artists' records at the Library. In particular, her passion for the work of sculptor Jean Antoine Houdon (1741-1928) illustrates two points. She devoted years to conducting research on Houdon and his artistic output. The research notes she compiled fill several shelves in the archives, including her unpublished manuscript on him (Helen Clay Frick Papers, Series: Research on Jean Antoine Houdon. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library), as well as records concerning an article on Madame Jean Antoine Houdon (Frick, Helen Clay, "Madame Jean Antoine Houdon," *Art Bulletin*, V. xxix, no. 3 [Sept. 1947], p. 207-212). While conducting her research, Miss Frick was able to purchase a trove of Houdon correspondence. In the 1930s, Miss Frick's agent in France, Madame Clotilde Misme Briere, the wife of noted French art historian Gaston Briere, purchased about 300 pieces of Houdon correspondence and business records from an Houdon descendent (Helen Clay Frick Papers, Series: Research on

Jean Antoine Houdon. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library). For fifty years, Miss Frick kept the correspondence, and worked on a manuscript on Houdon that was never published and a brief article on Madame Houdon that was. In her will, the original Houdon archives were returned to France and given to the Municipal Library in Versailles. Fortunately, the library holds copies of all of the letters.

Although not numerous, or necessarily voluminous, collections of artists' records have entered the library over the decades. They are candidates for digitizing, and, in this first example, the items are consulted as photocopies. The library received a collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century letters and ephemera relating to English artists. The Royal Academy of Arts is mentioned throughout, and many of the artists in the letters had ties to the Romantic poet and artist William Blake (1757-1827). One letter concerns the death of Williams Blake's widow, Catherine (1762-1831). It is from Frederick Tatham (1805-1878), a follower of Blake, to John Thomas Smith (1766-1833, Engraver, keeper of Prints at the British Museums, and early Blake biographer). He writes: "you will rejoice to hear that the widow has this morning joined her husband in the Paradise of Eternal Rest...Grief has been her greatest friend for it has enabled her to survive him only 4 years" (Frederick Tatham letter to John Thomas Smith, undated. Autographs and Letters of British Artists. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives).

A second example is of a collection of eighteenth and early nineteenth family letters that found its way to the library because of the strong interest of the library in documenting early American painters. The library attracted notable experts in the field of American painting, and these scholars, Mantle Fielding (1865-1941), John Hill Morgan (1870-1945), and Lawrence Park (1873-1924), among others, were diligent in their assistance to the library over the years. The widow of one early American art expert also came to view the library as a place for some of her husband's research records to be located. Charles Henry Hart (1847-1918) acquired Hesselius family correspondence, and it came to us through his widow in the 1920s (Hesselius Family Papers. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://www.frick.org/archives/FindingAids/HesseliusFamily.html>).

The majority of it consists of letters between various Hesselius women, 1790-1822, concerning domestic matters, but a small subseries of correspondence and business records concerns Adolf Ulrich Wertmuller (1751-1811), a Swedish painter who moved to America in 1796 and married Elizabeth Henderson, the granddaughter of Gustavus Hesselius, a prominent American painter. The couple lived in Delaware. Of particular significance in this collection are two letters (1795, 1786) from Jeanne-Louise Henriette Campan (née Genet), Queen Marie Antoinette's Lady-in-waiting, and a sort of "tutor" to her young children, regarding a painting of the Queen commissioned of

Wertmuller by the King of Sweden. The letters concern a decision about the fabric for her dress as well as the Queen's positive reaction to the painting when she saw it. The significance of the correspondence was brought to our notice by a historian who found the name in an online search. Other Wertmuller manuscript materials are connected to the sale of his and his wife's estates, including the sale of two paintings (one large and a smaller version) of "Danae receiving Jupiter in a Shower of Gold," for which the archives contains the sales receipt (*ibid.*).

Although not extensive, the library has received a few collections of individual twentieth century artists' papers that document significant parts of their career arc. In the case of two of the examples here, the records provide fairly comprehensive accounting documentation of their work lives. In the case of these artists' records, the papers were unorganized, but some had received catalogue numbers. The materials were removed from the book collections by the Archives Department and processed by Archives staff.

The first (noncomprehensive) example is the painter and designer Josef Albers (1888-1976). Beginning around 1946, Albers corresponded with the Frick librarians and offered copies of his publications, exhibitions checklists, printed material concerning his exhibitions and ideas, as well as photographs of some of his works of art. While the photographs are incorporated into the photoarchives and some printed items were catalogued in the print holdings of the library, some of the other materials have been collected together and that small collection is now in the Archives (Josef Albers Papers. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives).

Charles Webster Hawthorne (1872-1939) was an American portrait and genre painter. He founded the Cape Cod School of Art in 1899 in Provincetown. A collection of correspondence, notebooks, and press clippings given to the library by his son in 1948 contains materials documenting his award received in 1918 from the Art Institute of Chicago for his painting entitled *A Sculpture*, including congratulatory telegrams and installation photographs. The finding aid for this collection is on the web (Charles W. Hawthorne Papers. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://www.frick.org/archives/FindingAids/CharlesHawthornePapers.html>).

Raymond Perry Rodgers Neilson (1881-1964), who was born in New York City and raised in Far Rockaway, was a portraitist. He was also an instructor at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design, where he was active in its administration. His daughter gave us his papers, including his painting notebooks in which he wrote detailed descriptions of his portrait subjects as well as documentation for an exhibition catalogue for *Americans Valiant and Glorious* from 1945. The finding aid for this collection is also on the web (Raymond P. R. Neilson Papers. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://www.frick.org/archives/FindingAids/RPRNeilsonPapers.html>).

Not only have artists' records been identified in the regular book holdings of the library but a number of manuscript items have also been reassigned from Special Collections to the Archives Department. For instance, artists' sketchbooks are now considered manuscript materials. They were always considered "rare" and housed in the library's rare book cage, but they have now been appropriately reclassified. Two examples of artists' sketchbooks and diaries are worth noting. The archives houses a diary and sketches of Thomas Sully (1783-1872). Sully was a very long-lived and prolific painter. His diary (c. 1809-1871) illustrates his approach to his work (Incidents in the life of Thomas Sully, chiefly of painting. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://arcade.nyarc.org/record=b317305-S6>). A photocopy is consulted when requested in the Reading Room. The archives also houses the sketchbooks of Moses B. Russell (1810-1884), a miniaturist based in Boston. These date from the 1860s and contain a combination of rough sketches and more complete watercolors and drawings (Moses B. Russell Sketchbooks, 1855-1879. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://arcade.nyarc.org/record=b309481-S6>). The archives also houses the diaries of Theodore Robinson (1852-1896) (Theodore Robinson Diaries, 1892-1896. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://arcade.nyarc.org/record=b314567-S6>), and sketchbooks from Leon Dabo (1868-1960) (Leon Dabo Sketchbooks. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://arcade.nyarc.org/record=b201638-S6>), and Anton Mauve (1838-1888) (Anton Mauve Sketchbook. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://arcade.nyarc.org/record=b389011-S6>).

Apart from the more traditional records described in the preceding paragraphs, the Frick Art Reference Library archives contains more unconventional collections, one of which is the library's "Artists' Signatures" records: an alphabetical compilation of index cards containing examples of artists' signatures. These were used by library staff, primarily, to aid in identification of photographs of works of art. While most of the signatures are copies clipped from printed sources, there are several originals in this collection clipped from letters sent to the library by Sadakichi Hartman, (1867-1944) a critic, poet and actor (Artists' Signatures. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives). Within the Library's Administrative Correspondence is a series of letters between Mr. Hartman and various librarians (Frick Art Reference Library Central Correspondence. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives). This counts as one of the collections that "got away." The ever-practical librarians were unable to see a reason for value of retaining most of the letters for more than the signatures, and disposed of the rest and sent some back to Hartman. Unfortunately, the researcher will remain in the dark as to what Thomas Eakins and Childe Hassam had to say to Mr. Hartman.

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While describing the artists' records in the Archives gives a sense of the range of available resources, it should be noted that finding aids for many of the collections located at The Frick can be found on The Frick Collection's website (<http://www.frick.org/archives/index.htm>). Access is also provided through the library's on-line catalog, FRESCO. Finding aids have been encoded using the Archivists ToolKit. There are plans to digitize some of the materials described here using the Digital Lab located in the Conservation Department of the library. A final artists' archive to mention is one that has been digitized recently and is now available online (<http://www.images.frick.org>). It is a collection of over seventy albumen print photographs, circa 1885-1890, of artists posing in their Paris studios (Photographs of Artists in Their Studios. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives. <http://www.frick.org/archives/FindingAids/PhotosArtistsStudios.html>). A gift from Frank W. Stokes (1858-1955), an artist himself, to the library in 1940, the photographs have recently been the subject of a

blog post by the library's Andrew W. Mellon Chief Librarian, Stephen J. Bury, on the New York Art Resources Consortium website ("Inside the Parisian Studio." <http://nyarc.org/content/inside-parisian-studio>).

As time has passed, perceptions in the library have changed, and original artists' records are no longer viewed as of ancillary value, to be mined solely for bits of provenance detail to incorporate in photomount documentation. A re-evaluation of these artists records by the Archives staff and their subsequent arrangement and the publishing of finding aids has placed them on stage (if not center stage), and they can now be recognized as "treasures" in their own right.

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## Perpetual Fluxfest: Distinguishing Artists' Records from Artworks in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives

Julia Pelta Feldman, Processing Archivist, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Museum Archives, The Museum of Modern Art

The name of this paper, “Perpetual Fluxfest,” is also the name of a series of events planned in New York in 1964 and 1965, by George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Ben Vautier, Alison Knowles, Yoko Ono, and a number of other artists associated with Fluxus. The artistic manifestations connected to this festival were as diverse as the output of Fluxus itself, comprising posters, scores, newsletters, and other printed matter; events, performances, film screenings, and concerts; sculptural objects and editioned multiples; and still other so-called intermedia works that exist in between these categories, such as Jim Riddle’s attempt to sell bottles filled with his own urine, or Shigeko Kubota’s famous performance of *Vagina Painting* (1965), in which the artist’s paintbrush was held between her legs.

“Perpetual Fluxfest” might also describe my state of mind as processing archivist for The Museum of Modern Art’s Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, as I attempt to wrestle the documentation of this varied, ephemeral, and frankly messy art historical phenomenon into a tractable and orderly research collection. When the Silverman collection, one of the world’s largest of artwork, documentation, and published materials related to Fluxus, arrived at The Museum of Modern Art in 2009, it was not divided neatly into “artwork” and “archives.” The categorical confusion derives not only from the nature of the Silvermans’ collecting, but also from Fluxus itself, a movement (or network, tendency, or attitude) which intentionally defied traditional categories of art and artmaking. For this reason, works of art and historical documentation are often housed together—and it is often unclear which is which.

This ontological slippage between art and artifact is crucial to understanding Fluxus, but it is problematic for the archivist and curator seeking to preserve, provide research access to, and exhibit objects that are significant both as artworks and historical documents. Where is the line between an artist’s record and an artwork? Do event scores, documentary photographs, and other residua of performance record an ephemeral artwork, or are they components of the work itself? And at the end of a long day of rehousing, refolding, and description, is it necessary—or even feasible—for me to fit unruly objects into neat categories, or should I confine my judgments to practical matters and leave the ontology to posterity? These are just a few of the issues, both abstract and concrete, that I face every day as I process this collection.

The project of defining this collection and its contents is compounded by the shifting position of archival materials in art historical discourse and museum practices today. As archivists and special collections librarians know, the “object” and its associated aura have gained an elevated status, leading curators

to seek out our holdings for exhibition. Buzzwords like “document” and “archive” proliferate in criticism. Nonetheless, I believe that curatorial practice has not yet fully comprehended the need to maintain these objects’ integrity as archives: even in an exhibition setting, they remain documents, and are not, or not only, works of art to be fetishized. Curators may find that they have something to learn not only from archives, but also archival practice. Major art exhibitions now commonly feature vitrines replete with archival photographs, correspondence, personal effects, and other non-art materials whose significance may still be clearest in the context of the reading room, which allows for the contingency and multiple meanings that an exhibition’s didactic framing may obscure. With these developments, it is inevitable that objects formerly considered documentation should be revalued as art objects. This reconsideration has been prompted in part by a rise of interest in historical performance and other dematerializing practices, and made exigent by museums’ need to acquire, exhibit, and preserve ephemeral artworks.

MoMA is such an institution, and a desire to collect and display artworks that were seen in the 1960s as inherently uncollectable—and often designed that way—certainly motivated its acquisition of The Silverman Fluxus Collection, and likewise informs my work in the Museum’s Archives. It may be useful at this point to explain that the Archives was founded in 1989 to organize, preserve, and make accessible documentation of the museum’s history and activities. In 1998, with the transfer of primary source materials from the Library’s special collections, the Archives expanded its institutional mission, and since then has actively collected manuscript collections created outside the Museum.

Notable recent acquisitions by the Museum have included collections of both artwork and historical documentation: the Seth Siegel Collection; the Hermann and Nicole Daled Collection; and, by the far the largest in sheer size, the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection.

The Silverman Fluxus Collection includes an amazing quantity and diversity of Fluxus materials, collected over several decades by the Silvermans and their curator, Jon Hendricks. The most current numbers tally almost 400 boxes of archival material; over 5,000 objects catalogued into the museum collection; and over 1,500 printed volumes in the library. It was acquired by MoMA in 2009, with the understanding that the collection be divided into three components, to be allocated among three departments: correspondence and other documentation to the archives; artworks to the museum collection; and publications to the library. Even though Fluxus encompasses a daunting

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variety of media, it was decided that the Silverman collection should be in the care of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, due to that department's facility in handling the kind of graphic works and editioned materials that proliferate among Fluxus's works. Jon Hendricks, who built the collection, was brought into the museum as a consulting curator to assist with its cataloguing, processing, and curation.

This initial division was somewhat arbitrary. Most of what was housed at the Silvermans' office and warehouse in downtown Detroit (primarily the larger and mixed medium objects) was sent to the Prints department, while the contents of their filing cabinets, along with the primarily paper-based materials at Jon Hendricks' apartment in New York, were handed over to the Archives for processing into a research collection. The Silverman's vast Fluxus library is currently being cataloged into MoMA's library collection. Aside from the library transfer, these locations were provisional, as both documentation and artwork abound in both portions of the collection. This is due to the nature of the material, which does not lend itself to ready categorizing into art and artifact—as I will discuss later—but also to the nature of the collection itself. The portion entrusted to the Archives is comprised both of original documents deliberately acquired for their relevance to Fluxus activities, and of records created organically by the Silvermans and Hendricks in the course of their collecting, exhibiting, and publishing, which they have done prodigiously. These uses have determined the structure of the collection, and thus the location of individual objects: if a letter or other clearly archival document was used in an exhibition, it is very likely to be found among the objects accessioned into the museum collection, simply because it is still framed. Just as art and artists' records might share the same folder, deliberately acquired objects and incidentally produced records are often bound together inextricably. The activities, agency, and presence of the collectors permeate the material, and are an important aspect of its content and character.

For example, one primary strategy employed by the Silvermans and Hendricks in building the collection was to write directly to artists involved in the movement, inquiring about artworks, correspondence, or other relevant materials available for purchase. Jon Hendricks, the brother of Fluxus artist Geoffrey Hendricks, moved in some of the same circles as the Fluxus group in the 1960s and 1970s, and his personal relationships are often evident in his professional correspondence. A file on an artist might include the collection's letter to the artist from the 1990s; a response from the artist, with original documents from the 1960s and 1970s enclosed; contemporary exhibition announcements and catalogues of that artist's work; photographs of works the artist may have for sale; correspondence between Hendricks and the Silvermans about whether to purchase a work; and possibly, an inventory or accession sheet with information about one or some of the objects in the folder. And yet, a folder of jumbled records is hardly a novel challenge

to the archivist. Indeed, frustrating though it might be for archivist and researcher alike, we nonetheless value such inconsistency for the vividness and flavor they add to our appreciation of history. In this project, however, standard archival quandaries are compounded by the nature of Fluxus itself.

A primary goal for the artists associated with Fluxus was the breaking down of boundaries—among different artistic media; between audience and performer; and between art and life. Ephemeral, interactive, and sometimes disposable, many of the artistic formats associated with Fluxus were designed to resist traditional mechanisms of art display and commerce, as well as to undermine their own status as artworks. Similarly, the line between a record and an art object can be intentionally obfuscated. For precisely these reasons, the physical vestiges of Fluxus are supremely resistant to categorization and cataloguing.

For the sake of brevity, for this discussion, I will focus on the performativity of much Fluxus work. One artistic format crucial to Fluxus performance, and abundant in the Silverman collection, is the event score. Developed and used by George Maciunas, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, and many other Fluxus artists, event scores are written instructions for performance. Often comprising routine actions, familiar objects and simple ideas, an event score recontextualizes the everyday into artworks. La Monte Young's *Composition 1961*, which reads "Draw a Straight Line and Follow It," is an important early example. The event score also creates an authorial ambiguity that appeals to the Fluxus sensibility: is the artist the one who wrote the score, or the one performing it? Instructions may be abstract, or simply unperformable, or so woven into the fabric of the quotidian that their performance is not only commonplace but inevitable, as in an enigmatic event score by George Brecht which reads only "Thursday" (from *Water Yam*, 1963).

Where, in such a piece, is the actual work of art located? What is the relationship of the score itself—the printed, painted, or handwritten document—to the constellation of activities, objects, locations and temporalities that constitute the work of art? Most importantly for my purposes, can the answers to these questions serve to define an event score as artwork or artifact?

Photographs of such performances form another significant component of the Silverman collection. Some pictures were once simply snapshots, taken by photographers who may or may not have been artists. Photographs like these have only come to be appreciated as exhibition-worthy through the effects of distance, patination, and art historical retrospection. Primarily, a performance photograph is information: a visual referent for an event, installation, or situation. For Fluxus in particular, it remains an important document of how event scores can produce unexpected results. A series of photographs taken by a newspaper reporter, which now reside in the museum collection, documents Nam June Paik's *Zen For Head* (1962), his inspired interpretation of La Monte Young's instruction to

draw a straight line and follow it: the artist dipped his head in ink and tomato juice and dragged it along paper. These images are not only information: they are reified into objects by their torn corners, wrinkled edges, and their testimony to artworks that may have no other tangible expression. As a material substitute for an immaterial work, the performance photograph has developed an aura totally independent of its documentary role: an aura that might require curators, archivists, and viewers to reckon with it as an artwork.

As vital as these questions are to art historical discourse about Fluxus, they remain philosophical questions. My function with regard to the Silverman Collection is archivist – not ontologist. The realities of the collection and of the museum’s institutional structure require a final taxonomic designation: should a particular object live in the Archives, or in the Museum collection? To establish a set of determinant criteria, the Archives department initiated a series of three interdepartmental meetings, which ultimately included representatives from the Museum Archives, The Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, the Department of Photography, the Department of Media and Performance, Jon Hendricks, and the Library. Fluidity and collaboration can be challenging within MoMA’s departmental structure, but Fluxus—inherently fluid and collaborative—demands a collective approach.

In advance of these meetings, I attempted to create a list of every type of object in the portion of the collection held by the Archives. (Oh, how naïve I was!) This document was flawed, inconsistent, and changed constantly as the discussion, along with my understanding of the collection, evolved. Nonetheless, this worksheet at least gave structure to our confusion. We were able to work our way through each category, reviewing different examples to determine a “final deposit” for each: archives, museum collection, or library.

This process has required compromise between the different departments, but it has also facilitated new understandings and collaboration. The curators among us are accustomed to the precise item-level cataloguing necessary for maintaining museum collections, but they appreciate the way that the item groupings favored by archivists can preserve precious context and relationships that might be invisible in an exhibition, or lost in a vast collections database. Furthermore, they recognize that artworks can contain important historical information, which must remain accessible to researchers. This is frequently the case with works of graphic design by Maciunas, which he and other artists often used for correspondence. In a 1962 letter to his parents, Ben Patterson refers to his writing support—a piece of stationery designed by Maciunas—as the official Fluxus “letterhead.” The Archives must adapt as well. While item-level description is not possible for such a large project—and not always desirable for archival research, where context can be content—my finding aid will need to meet the needs not only of researchers but also those of curators searching for exhibition materials.

However, it would be inaccurate, if not hubristic and naïve, to suggest that these meetings produced definitive categorizations of artwork and artifact. Designating an object as one or the other does not necessarily determine its departmental deposit: practical questions of access, preservation, and maintaining context also matter. Inevitably, therefore, some works of art will end up in the archives, and some archival material will be catalogued into the collection. This pragmatic approach is also informed by the knowledge that our decisions are not final: just as an artifact of performance may today be recontextualized as an autonomous artwork, future generations of scholars, curators, and archivists will surely draw their own ontological conclusions.

Yet in their way, these discussions were unprecedented at MoMA. The Museum is not ideally organized for material like Fluxus, nor for collections like the Silvermans’. History also plays a role: it is no secret that MoMA didn’t collect much Fluxus in the 1960s and 1970s, when this work was being made, nor for some time thereafter. The museum’s collecting of this period is associated more with the work of pop artists such as Claes Oldenburg and practitioners of detached abstraction, minimalists and post-minimalists like Robert Morris – both of whom, incidentally, were associated with Fluxus and collaborated with Maciunas.

Fluxus was countercultural and anti-institutional, at a time when MoMA was seen by many as an emblem of cultural hegemony. This reputation remains difficult to shake, and the historical relationship between the museum and Fluxus—or lack thereof—is undeniably a part of the context in which the Silverman collection is being processed. Jon Hendricks, the consulting curator who collected both its artworks and research material, and with whom I work very closely on the archive, has his own history with MoMA. As a member of the politically motivated Guerrilla Art Action Group or “GAAG,” in the late 1960s and early 1970s Hendricks staged demonstrations at MoMA and other museums. In 1969, Hendricks and fellow GAAG founder Jean Toche removed Malevich’s *White on White* from MoMA’s walls and left a manifesto in its place, both questioning and rebelling against the clean, cool, and constricted narrative of artistic lineage MoMA seemed to represent.

Today, Jon Hendricks occupies the office next to mine, and helps guide my work in processing the Silverman collection. In September he celebrated the opening of the MoMA exhibition *Thing/Thought: Fluxus Editions, 1962-1978*, which he co-organized with Gretchen Wagner, assistant curator in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, and a primary agent in the museum-wide Fluxus project. The books, boxes, objects, posters, photographs, event scores, and ephemera included in this exhibition—sourced from both the archive and the museum collection—transcend the multifarious histories of Fluxus at MoMA. They look elegant and completely at home hanging on MoMA’s white walls. Indeed, MoMA’s acquisition of the Silverman collection is an opportunity to engage with the in-

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stitutional critique it inspired in the 1960s, which once spilled into its halls only through the unauthorized protests of groups like GAAG.

As the archivist for this collection, I have come to understand that just as Jon's identity at MoMA has shifted from demonstrator to curator, the varied manifestations of Fluxus cannot be divided into simplistic categories without losing some of their meaning. Even as I process the Silverman Collection, the identities, auras, and meanings of the artworks and artifacts that comprise it will continue to shift, while remaining true to their origins. Curators and scholars looking back now may consider that these objects have participated in history—and not simply recorded it. My task is to dedicate myself to the concrete, creating a framework that might support the inevitable fluctuations of art history. The ontologizing will continue. The Fluxfest is perpetual.

## Artful Arrangement: The Unique Challenge of Processing Artists' Papers in Archives

Erin Murphy, Archivist, Harvard Art Museum Archives

The Harvard Art Museums Archives has only officially been in existence since about 2003, so we're relatively new, which means playing catch up with a lot of the typical museum records. Within the past couple of years, we've been able to broaden our scope from internal museum records to acquiring outside donations. Many of these donations have come from Harvard alumni who went through the Fine Arts program in the 1920s and 1930s. Many became successful artists (Jack Levine, Denman Ross, and Alfonso Ossorio), and in taking their papers, we've learned a lot about the unique challenges associated with processing artists' papers.

Our most recent project was the arrangement and description of the Alfonso Ossorio and Ted Dragon Papers. Alfonso Ossorio was born in the Philippines and became an American citizen in the 1930s. He attended Harvard from 1934 to 1938. Shortly after he graduated, World War II began and Ossorio became a medical artist, often drawing extremely gruesome and disturbing surgical procedures. As one might expect, these had a pretty big influence on his art. Soon after the war, Ossorio met Ted Dragon, who would be his partner of over 50 years and whose papers are also in the collection. The two moved to East Hampton when Ossorio purchased The Creeks, a gargantuan estate previously owned by artist Albert Herter and his wife Adele.

Ossorio was a big part of the Abstract Expressionist movement, and the Creeks played an important role in the artist community. The estate included large studios and guest houses, which Ossorio let people make use of. Among those who spent time at The Creeks were two of Ossorio's closest friends: Jackson Pollock, who lived nearby; and Jean Dubuffet. In addition, the house maintained a large gallery that served as an exhibition venue for such important movements as Art Brut.

Ossorio died in 1991 and his papers were donated to the Archives in 2008. Between his death and the donation, the papers were kept in the Ossorio Foundation's warehouse in the Hamptons, in boxes and file cabinets. Upon transfer to the archives, the materials were shifted into archival record cartons to await processing. Some materials had been foldered; most were placed into the cartons haphazardly.

Our first sort of "Oh, hey, we haven't dealt with this before" moment was when we got a look at some of the unusual materials that a set of artist's papers might contain. There were the more typical archival materials, but also unusual items: artists' occupational tools, such as paints, turpentine, and pigments; sketches; painted material; film reels; and much, much more. While having these items enhances the richness and coolness of the collection, they do raise questions: "How do we store

these?" "Is that paint leaking?" "Are the containers the materials are in going to degrade and damage other items in the archives?" These are pretty big questions, especially when you haven't even gotten to the processing part yet. We're lucky enough to have a conservation department on site that was able to evaluate and stabilize everything. If you don't, I cannot recommend enough the value of finding a professional to help you with this process. We're used to handling conservation of paper and photos and film: this was a much bigger animal, and not commonly in an archivists' knowledge base.

So, onto the actual processing... I began working at the archives in 2009. Before I arrived, the papers had been roughly sorted by a pair of interns who had come and gone by the time I arrived. Unfortunately, while the items were in somewhat discernable groups, the interns had not left clear documentation of the decisions they had made or the rationale underlying those decisions. This isn't uncommon. In an archives with a small budget, things are done in pieces much more often than we'd like, but you make progress in any way that you can. So, three years after these interns had left, we received enough funding for one person, me, to spend half-time processing for three months. Rather than just do another chunk, we decided it was in our best interest (since we didn't know when more funding was coming) to finish the project completely, even if it meant doing a lower level of processing. The main goal of an archives is to have its holdings open for research, and this collection was not, even though the materials were requested frequently.

I think, when starting a project like this, the two most important things to do even before you start are, first: know your artist; and, second: know your audience. Knowing your artist will come in handy throughout the process, of course. For example, right away with this project, I was able to see that the interns had misidentified items as "clippings and memorabilia" that were actually research materials Ossorio used for his artwork, so I knew the series they had created were not correct. While this meant that I basically was starting from scratch, at least I found it out at the beginning of the process.

Knowing your audience can be much trickier than you'd imagine. Some of this depends on what type of institution you work for. For me, working at a museum that is a part of a university, the audience was very broad and varied. We had students and faculty, of course, including both Harvard historians and art historians from other institutions. We had researchers who were looking at the collection for the Ossorio material, but also ones who were concentrating on Pollock and Dubuffet. There have been researchers only looking at Ossorio's estate, The Creeks. And then there were the conifers. After Os-

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sorio purchased the Creeks, he became obsessed with conifers. He imported conifers, kept incredible journals and pictures of conifers. He used the trees as art, manipulating their growing patterns. He built sculpture into the conifers. At one point, he had the largest, most diverse gathering of conifers in North America. People would come from Europe and Asia just to see his trees. So when making processing decisions, we had to keep all of these people in mind.

The questions I asked myself continuously during processing can be summarized in the four sections following here.

### **What Series Can I Create That Will Not Disrupt the Study of Ossorio's Flow as an Artist but Still Allow for Efficient Research?**

This was the most difficult questions that I dealt with throughout the entirety of this project. Since Ossorio was creating art for more than 60 years, the collection documents both his life and art as one entity. Not assigning some sort of order, however, was not an option since this would impede access and ease of research. The idea of putting together the materials chronologically, with no other divisions was considered, but enough of the material was undated as to make this option unviable.

In the end, we arranged the material into five very broad series, the first being personal and biographical material. Ossorio's family played a huge part in his life. He was one of six children and his father began the largest sugar factory in the Philippines, which is still in operation today. We made the decision to cull material dealing with the family together as a subseries in this personal section, but this was not without impact on the rest of the collection. Ossorio was raised very strictly Catholic, and continued to practice his faith during the course of his life, but he felt a continual struggle, as he was also a homosexual, and most of his family members did not recognize his relationship with his partner. As a consequence of this struggle, Ossorio's art is awash in religious and sexual themes. Separating this material into its own subseries helped with the organization of the items, but did pull the very strong connection with his artwork away. To manage this issue, which happened in many different places, we tried to make clear in the finding aid that the series were all very closely related, and that the materials have cross-series connections. Whenever possible, we would point out specific connections with notes.

One series is dedicated to Ossorio's artwork. This was the most difficult series to ascribe an order to. Much of it was general research material, which may have been gathered for a particular project, but if it was not marked as such, we did not feel comfortable assigning it to one. Since Ossorio's house was also a gallery and he maintained an enormous art collection, culling material that wasn't his own work also proved to be difficult, especially when you consider the "abstract" part of his genre - and I'm no art expert.

### **How Do I Handle Actual Artwork?**

Since I work at an art museum, there were, what you might politely term border constraints. The collection was donated to the archives, but our Drawings department might believe that any drawings or sketches should reside with them. In a museum setting where you are dealing with artists' papers, this issue can rear its head quite often. It's important from the start to have your reasoning for keeping the material with you or for letting it reside elsewhere well thought out. One reason for keeping it is that the collection was given to the Archives specifically, and that it was all meant to stay together. You may want to think about this when creating your deed of gift. If you do feel like the material should stay with the Archives, be sure to make clear that you have the knowledge and resources to handle the material safely. And if you don't, be willing to get the training to do so.

Another more amusing problem we had was figuring out if something was "art." Tiny sketches drawn on scrap paper or on the backs of financial statements were easy to miss. There were many sketches drawn on envelopes and such that were much easier to classify. What about items with blobs of paint on them? Were they made to look precisely like that, or were they merely lying around when paint fell on them? With this particular collection, when in doubt, we called it art. This is another area where it's extremely important to know your artist and the art movement/period he or she belonged to.

Something to consider when you're accepting a collection of artists' papers is the larger number of oversized items than in typical manuscript collection. These items may well be fragile artwork, increasing the concern for space. During the course of this project (and until at least 2013), the Museum is completely closed for renovation. We're currently housed in a small room at another site, with barely enough room to function. Add a plethora of oversized items and space logistics can get very tricky. Also be sure to consider the cost of boxes and folders to house these materials. If you're creating a budget, these items should be given careful thought.

### **How Do I Handle Sensitive Financial Information That Might Be Crucial to Research but Is Closed as a Series?**

Since Ossorio was also a benefactor and collector, many of his financial records relate to the art world. For example, we have a large quantity of cancelled checks written to and cashed by Jackson Pollock. Through these checks, you can see just how close Ossorio and Pollock were, and how significant a financial backer Ossorio was. This is just one instance: Ossorio's financial support of artists ranges much further. Normally these types of financial records would be closed for research. We have decided to take requests on a case-by-case basis, and to ask permission from the Ossorio Foundation for specific researchers. This is certainly not the arrangement we'd have in a perfect world, but

it does at least give us a chance to open up parts of the financial series. We hope, possibly futilely, that the Foundation will, at some point, allow us to open the financial records completely.

**How Can I Create the Finding Aid in Such an Unusual Collection So That People Can Find It Useful?**

The last thing I have time to talk about today is the creation of the finding aid. This was a much bigger challenge than I had expected. It's very difficult, as an archivist, to have something not wrapped up perfectly in a neat bow. But with this type of collection, since the materials within series weren't arranged alphabetically or chronologically, we had to think of a way to put things together in a reasonable, easy-to-understand manner. Enter topical groupings! These allowed us to bring similar items within subseries together, without imposing a false order to them. While it's easy to put correspondence in alphabetical order, or financial records in chronological order, how to do put a subseries that contains multiple subjects within itself in order? Using topical groupings we were able, we believed, to organize materials better into the smaller groups that researchers might want to see without having to add sub-sub series.

This has been an incredible challenge, but we've learned so much from it. Our policies and procedures for appraising and processing artists' papers in the future have significantly benefited from the experience we've gained in handling a collection both as rich and as diverse as this.

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### The Art of the Possible: Processing an Artist-Run Center's Archives

Denis Lessard, Consultant in Records and Archives Management, Montreal

My presentation will be a practical account of my experience processing the archives of Centre des arts actuels Skol, an artist-run center in Montreal (Quebec, Canada) that was founded in 1984. I speak here from a threefold position: I was trained in art history; early on, I began a practice as an artist, mainly in performance, photo-based art, and installation; and I am now a trained archivist.

#### The Archives Processing Room at Skol

Skol is a non-commercial gallery presenting, as noted in its 2011-2012 programming brochure, “the work of artists and theorists in the early stages of their careers. The centre’s programming is in place to privilege exploratory and experimental practices.”

The antecedent of the Archives Processing Room at Skol was Le Bureau d’investigation d’archives/The Office for Archival Review (OAR), which was instituted in the summer of 2009. The OAR brochure described it as “a group of artists-researchers that seeks to understand archival practices through on-site research projects. Employing a hands-on approach, the OAR’s production considers the role, relevance, and possibilities of an archive by using this material as a site of interaction, exchange and production. Confronted with an ever-growing mass of historical material, Centre des arts actuels Skol recruited the expertise of the OAR to conduct an investigation of their programming archives. In turn, the OAR’s process questions strategies of record keeping and self-preservation within the context of an artist-run centre: accumulation, reduction, preservation and destruction.”

OAR was a creative response to the archives on the part of an artists’ collective; if it didn’t exactly follow the norms of archival science, it did express a genuine interest and concern for archives at Skol, coming from its staff and members.

Processing the archives at Skol included the two steps described here. First, a needs assessment was carried out between July and September, 2010. We proposed a five-year strategic plan, which included the processing of Skol’s historical archives. In the second step, work on Skol’s archives began in February, 2011, with the preparation of a new classification scheme followed by the actual processing of the documents. My contract also involved a number of tasks in relation to records management.

From March to September, I was allotted the small exhibition space to be used as a processing room for the archives. This context provided a public dimension to the project as a way of sharing my experience and raising awareness about the importance of preserving the memory of the artist-run centers’ network, and about the tasks involved in processing an archive.

Whereas the archivist usually works in relative isolation, in the comfort and controlled environment of the archives department, working on the premises also allowed me a daily interaction with the gallery staff. This enabled me to share discoveries and benefit from their current experience and memories of past programming. Undoubtedly, I received the good influence of the artistic context that produced the archives being processed. Thus the processing becomes a partnership. This can only enrich the archivist’s process itself, since one is challenged by questions from staff and gallery visitors, constantly leading one to clarify one’s practice for a nonspecialized audience.

Certainly a gallery space does not necessarily meet every condition required for an archives department in terms of preservation and climatic control. However, rather than stopping ourselves from taking action for the lack of ideal conditions, we have decided to go forward with sufficient, basic conditions in order to complete our tasks in conformity with the main requirements: dim lighting, moderate heating, archival sleeves, and acid-free containers and folders.

It would probably be a tautology to say that all records (or almost) are artists’ records in an artist-run center. We did discover a few “artworks” in Skol’s archives: original sketches, drawings, and collages that had been sent along with project proposals, mostly in the first two decades of the gallery. We have left them in the artists’ files, but they can be located easily by consulting the fonds’ final accession list, which is in digital format. We find that they offer interesting avenues of research, especially about the artist’s process and conceptualization of works. Therefore the best place for them is with the related documents that they supplement, since they act there as reference documents.

Skol’s archives document lesser known or unknown artists on the global/commercial scale. They have been processed in the spirit of nonprofit, artist-run culture. Similarly to Erin Murphy’s experience at Harvard with the Ossorio papers, we have respected a pre-existent, organic dichotomy between the artists’ files—which document projects in the making—and the so-called official programming binders. These account retrospectively for the gallery’s activities, and include press releases, artwork lists, visual documentation of completed projects, and reviews.

If “artworks” have been left as records originally, they are part of an organic whole; they come with an intention. We should respect not only the principle of provenance but also a form of immanence that tells about the creative process and the various activities that surround artmaking as such. Our approaches to processing artists’ records should remain informed by the manner in which these fonds and collections have been constituted

by the artists themselves and their collectors. A part of the solution might reside in the flexible nature of the classification scheme.

Michèle Thériault has described the publication *Documentary Protocols* (1967-1975) as

the third part of a major project that took place over a three-year period, and that also included two exhibitions (...) presented at the [Leonard and Bina Ellen Art] Gallery[, Concordia University, Montreal] in 2007 and 2008. This ambitious historical undertaking, conceived and developed by Vincent Bonin in response to an invitation from the Gallery, operates on many levels. It is an attempt to grasp and describe the interweaving of a *context* and *transition*, specifically with regard to the paradigm of self-determination in Canadian art that emerged in the mid-1960s [that is, the artist-run centers' network]; the transformation of artists into managers in their relationships with governmental structures and social programs developed at the same time; and the rupture that occurred in the mid-1970s between certain esthetic positions and political objectives. In addition, the project draws on various archival holdings in a parallel attempt to construct a narrative out of documents attesting to the events and actions that shaped that context and transition. Finally, through the various stages of production, it reveals the archival document's role and function in its transitions, more or less difficult, from one resting place to another.<sup>1</sup>

This project tells something about the new preciousness of the artist-run centers' documents, due to their rarity and/or uniqueness. It is also about the challenge of circulating these documents.

Vincent Bonin's essay for *Documentary Protocols* includes the following observation:

... to conceive an exhibition is to face the very limits of the utopia in which there is a neutral access point to information.... Thus, the white cube is not confined to the virgin surfaces of the gallery's walls. The architectural framework itself must also reproduce the humidity and temperature conditions of the vaults in which documents and works are stored. To obtain permission to borrow objects from public collections, a gallery must have a category 'A' status granted by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board.

Conversely, according to our experience, procedures for managing loan requests vary considerably from one in-

stitution to another.

Among lending institutions, the National Gallery of Canada imposed the strictest parameters. Each set of documents arrived in custom-built crates, and included protective, archival cardboard to prevent direct contact with the display cases. Some of the more fragile pieces were submitted to restoration committees in order to determine if they could leave the vaults. Despite such administrative red tape, most loan requests were accepted. The University of British Columbia's Rare Book and Special Collections library, however, did not allow archival items... to leave their premises under the pretext that the institution does not currently have a loan policy.<sup>2</sup>

Bonin also adds that "it would not have been conceivable to organize these exhibitions without creating friction between the museological mediation of documents and the latter's accessibility as research materials."<sup>3</sup>

This experience does confirm the double nature of artists' records as both records and artworks; there is a fine line where manuscript notes become drawings. Some situations defy the art historical categorization that, in turn, has to be translated into archival description. To me, this neuralgic "hinge" between art history and archival science is a major aspect of our challenge with artists' records.

I will continue my presentation with a set of comments and open-ended questions.

Sally Brazil's proposal and presentation today, based on her experience at the Frick Collection Archives, inspired these thoughts. As archivists we are divided between putting records to use and the incumbent challenges this entails. For example: the insurance fees for the "artwork" records when they are exhibited or borrowed for exhibitions, as well as the conditions for preservation and exhibition of actual items versus their digital and virtual presentation. The latter seems to be a practical solution, but what about the physical qualities of the objects? The digital definitely creates a barrier between us as viewers and the objects.

Let's take the particular case of mail art: at the time, artists were "spontaneously" sending artworks; as well, it was a mode of inscription into a certain canon of contemporaneity in art at the time. These are challenges of conceptual art, in which there often is a blurring of practices and levels of completion of artworks.

We have the example of Art Metropole in Toronto, described on its website as being "founded by the Canadian artists collective General Idea as a non-profit artist-run archive and distri-

<sup>1</sup> Michèle Thériault, "Exhibiting Research," *Documentary Protocols. Protocoles documentaires* (1967-1975). Montreal, Leonard & Bina Elle Gallery, Concordia University, 2010, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Vincent Bonin, "Documentary Protocols (1967-1975)", op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

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bution agency for artists' publications and other materials." A great deal of their collection has been amassed through receiving mail art in the past; the collection of over 13,000 items has been transferred to the National Gallery of Canada in 1997. It seems to have been a time of profusion, of generosity and spontaneity, which has since been taken over by the commercial art market, with the influence of the museum context; the fact that we need to put a value on everything, for insurance and sale purposes.

But these practices go back to deep traits ingrained in human nature, like the very human propensity to collect and sell things. In French we have the verb "thésauriser," which is translated in a rather unsatisfying way as "hoarding" or "building up of capital." "Thésauriser" contains the word "treasure," as in the word "thesaurus." It is both about the rich wonder of the treasure, and the responsibilities and worries that come with it.

Our work as archivists is also determined in part by the prior practices of art historians and museum curators in the past centuries who salvaged the slightest traces of an artist's practice; this can lead to extreme cases of fetishization. Allison Hemler, from the Felix Gonzales-Torres Foundation,

who will speak tomorrow, uses the revealing notion of monumentalization. Will we be able to develop strategies that bypass the commodification of artists' records and regain the state of generosity that enabled their production?

I have titled this presentation "The Art of the Possible," because we have managed to process a fonds with limited resources, under basic working conditions. Such an undertaking shows that an organization cares for its documents, demonstrating a commitment to its history and legacy. The completed processing of Skol's archives will culminate in a juried exhibition entitled *Sortons les archives/Embracing the Archive*. It will consist of projects by art historians and artists alike based on Skol's archives and will be held in November and December 2011, on the occasion of Skol's 27th anniversary. You are most welcome to visit the exhibition if you happen to be in Montreal at that time.

Author's note: Thank you to the Archivists Round Table for organizing this symposium and accepting my proposal. Special thanks to Rachel Chatalbash. And to Cheryl Siegel, head librarian and archivist at the Vancouver Art Gallery, who told me about the symposium in the first place.

# Collaborating to Document the Past: Artists and Archivists Working Together

## Introduction

Farris Wahbeh, Whitney Museum of American Art

One of the challenges inherent in the archival profession is contextualization: linking the material accumulation of documentation with the intent and function behind the creation of those very records. When dealing with records relating to artists, this contextual linking becomes ever more acute. Artists' records not only situate the biographical, geographical, and historical context of the artist, but also anchor their artistic process and methodologies. In this regard, a collection of artists' records can serve a double function: both as a body of work and as a historical record of the work of art itself. This doubling of contextualization necessitates strategies to capture information from the artist directly. The bridge between the record and its creator has been discussed in archival theory for some time, specifically in regards to the concept of the record's life cycle versus its continuum. The papers presented in this panel put these theories into practice: demonstrating that when an artist is a record creator, the nuances of information capture are as vital as the records themselves.

## Studio Archives: Voices of Living Artists, Their Assistants, and Their Archivists

Heather Gendron, Sloane Art Library, UNC Chapel Hill & Eumie Imm-Stroukoff, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

We would like to begin by briefly explaining how this project initially developed. It began from two different trajectories. As a university art librarian working with studio art students and faculty, Heather was interested in how artists use their studio archives for creative research. Eumie's interest in the topic came from her background as a museum librarian, working with curators and scholars whose projects and research deal with living artists. Specifically, she was interested in the idea of self-documentation by the artist and how it affects scholarly research.

After speaking with artists, their assistants, and art historians, we began to ask ourselves how we as art information professionals could provide support to artists in creating and maintaining studio archives. Some university studio art faculty had expressed to Heather an interest in having a workbook that they could use, not just for themselves, but also for teaching professional practice courses. In a survey Eumie conducted in February of 2010, art historians were asked what they thought we could do to assist artists. One art historian said, "Let artists know how important this information is. Help them get all the information in one place and make sure an executor knows where everything is...Non-arts people would have no idea how important the smallest things might be, including something like an address book or contact list..."

### Our Publication & Process

Our goal is to publish a guide for artists and their assistants on how to establish an archive, and how to contribute to and maintain it over time. The publication that we are working

on now is meant to be a practical guide for the working artist, and the voices of the artists that we have interviewed will be key to the publication. We have also been in contact with the Joan Mitchell Foundation regarding their Creating a Lasting Legacy (CALL) program that provides support to artists in archiving and documenting their careers, including providing artists with a database to track their work.

### Case Studies

Over the past few years, we have compiled case studies and gathered data about artists' studios, artists' archives, and art historical research. We are currently interviewing a range of artists, from those who are just starting their careers, or in the early stages of their practice, to well-established and late-career artists. We have met with artists who have had the resources to hire studio assistants, and with those who, for a variety of reasons, have never been able to. The work created by the artists we have met ranges from traditional media—like painting and sculpture—to performance-based and site-specific work. To date, we have visited the studios of artists Cai Guo Qiang, Mel Chin, Laurence Seredowych, Susan Harbage Page, Juan Logan, and Vernon Wilson.

### Why Artists Keep Studio Archives

From our discussions with artists who actively keep studio archives, we know that they do so primarily to run the business side of their studio. With minimal effort, artists who maintain an archive have ready access to the documentation they need in order to market and sell their work. In addition, by having and maintaining studio archives, artists have more control over their creative process, their legacy and their estate.

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### Challenges

We have found through our research that artists who do not keep studio archives are challenged by a lack of funding and restrictions on their time. Additionally, some of them do not realize the importance of maintaining a studio archive or simply lack the skills needed to start one. The two biggest challenges are time and money. All artists would rather be in their studio creating new work, instead of having to manage their archive. They typically want to fund the creation of new work, which can often take precedence over other demands such as attending to parts of the archive that they may not have an urgent need to access. Artists are just like anyone else: most of us would rather do our work than spend half of our day filing paperwork. Those just getting started are not sure where to start, how much to document, what to collect or what to discard. Those with resources can hire an assistant to help, but many are not able to.

All of the artists whom we spoke to are challenged in some way by technology and everyone had questions about digital preservation. The studios are finding that they run out of digital storage space quickly, especially as the need to document work on digital video increases. Supplies, digital storage, and furniture to store artwork and paperwork can be very expensive, as we all know. Despite these challenges, all of the artists we spoke to are trying in some way or another to keep a record of their work.

### **A Framework for Conceptualizing Studio Archives**

Studio archives are comprised of both physical and digital materials and are (1) the artwork created by the artist and (2) the documentation related to the work. This can include documentation about the creation of the work, its exhibition and sales history, and conservation treatment. The studio archives that we visited also included (3) collections that artists keep. These collections have contained artwork by other artists and/or materials that inspired the creation of new work (e.g., collections of vintage photographs), as well as source materials (e.g., objects for still lifes) and personal libraries. Not everything that an artist considers as part of his/her archive would be considered for acquisition by an institutional archive or museum.

### Studio Archive Inventories

In addition to the artwork itself, the inventory and the documentation related to it are critical parts of the studio archive. While many artists have the resources to keep a digital inventory of their work, some do not maintain their inventories in a database. Instead, they might keep them on paper, or perhaps both on paper and in a digital format. These lists range in size and quality, and can be quite rudimentary, as well as elaborate.

The artist Vernon Wilson uses paper and pen to keep track of his inventory. His collection is organized systematically using a numbering system that he created. The inventory numbers

refer back to a binder that includes very specific information about each work of art (e.g., condition reports, printmaking, processes, etc.).

Some artists face challenges in establishing a system for their inventories. For example, one of the painters that we visited keeps two separate inventories: one is on paper and was created before she owned a computer; the other, was created in Microsoft Word and lists more recent work. These inventories are very basic and include the title, dimension, and medium of the artwork, and only sometimes include the date of creation. They are incomplete, meaning that they do not list the entire artist's output. This artist does not have the means to hire an assistant and lacks office management skills, and so does not know how to create or work with spreadsheets or databases. However, she mentioned that she has been learning about commercial databases at the painting workshops that she has been attending and is interested in pursuing that avenue if it can help her organize her inventory.

### Databases

So far, most of the art inventories we have seen on our studio visits were kept in a spreadsheet or a homegrown database. An artist's record for an artwork will usually include any or all of the following fields: the title of the artwork, the names of any collaborators associated with the work, possibly an inventory number, the current location of the work, a completion date, exhibition information, materials, size, anticipated selling price or price sold at, provenance, and any other notes related to the artwork.

Three of the studios we visited used databases that were built using Filemaker Pro or AppleWorks software. Two artists were able to hire studio assistants and, in addition, already had minimal computer skills. In one case, the artist developed the skills he needed on his own in order to create a database for his studio.

With funding from the Joan Mitchell Foundation (JMF), the artist Mel Chin was able to hire an assistant for 25 hours a week to work solely on his archives and in the preparation of his retrospective exhibition at the New Orleans Museum of Art in 2013. Chin previously used a simple spreadsheet to inventory his work. Upon hiring an assistant, he started to use a Filemaker Pro database that was developed by the JMF to track his artwork and archives.

Cai Guo Qiang's database was created in-house by his archives' staff also using Filemaker Pro. In addition to tracking Cai's work, the database is used to create exhibition checklists, to respond to requests from researchers, the press, and curators working on exhibits, and to gather material in preparation for public presentations. One of his staff members explained that Cai occasionally asks for reports so that he can revisit how he previously executed a work. In such cases, the database becomes a source for the re-creation of an artwork or for the creation of new works.

One of Cai's assistants described the studio archive as being "alive" and constantly changing. A distinction she made between cataloging objects in a museum database and cataloging materials for an artist's studio is how the terminology an artist uses will change and how those changes must be tracked. For example, earlier in his career, Cai used the term "fireworks" to describe his work, but then switched to "explosion events." His assistant paid attention to these changes in terminology and tracked them in the database.

Many of Cai's artworks also share the same title, so his assistant found it necessary to enter additional descriptions of the pieces in order to distinguish one from the other. She explained that, "A lot of the gunpowder drawings are concept notes and Cai might make them before or after an explosion project," and both the gunpowder drawings and the explosion event are given the same title. In 2005, Cai completed a series of works called "Black Rainbow." Computer renderings and video documentation were created for each work. In the case of this project, Cai called a related drawing "Black Fireworks" and titled several other works "Black Fireworks." Cataloging similar and related works can be problematic and time-consuming for studio archives staff.

In addition to artwork, inventory, and databases, other types of documentation are found in artist's studios, including those related to the business aspects of the studio (e.g., license agreements, contracts, and professional correspondence with museums, galleries, and photographers; receipts and invoices, etc.), as well as materials considered "biographical" (e.g., resumes, family photos, diaries, transcripts and recordings of interviews with the artist, etc.).

A common question we get from artists is how to archive email correspondence. The studios we visited relied on an email service provider to archive this material, but understood the unsustainable nature of this solution. One studio had developed guidelines for selecting emails to preserve. They reformatted these as PDFs and saved them on an external hard drive. In earlier years, they had printed all email correspondence and quickly realized the inefficiency of this system.

### Collections

Artists also keep in their studios, or at other locations, collections of artwork by other artists, collections of inspirational materials, as well as personal libraries. As one artist noted, "This is stuff you may not actually use, but that inspires your work...it's important to the work...all this collecting of history." Some artists keep collections of found objects and other materials on hand that inspire the creation of new works and that may ultimately become part of them. The artist Susan Harbage Page works heavily with found objects, like old photographs and vintage textiles. The artist Laurence Seredowych keeps on hand objects that she finds at thrift stores and yard sales that inspire her still life paintings.

Personal libraries also inspire many artists. The personal library that Cai keeps in his studio is organized by categories that he created. These headings include: Travel, Chinese Culture, Gardens, Art History/History, Fireworks, and Sex and Ghosts. As his studio archives' assistant explained, this library inspires and informs projects that Cai is currently working on.

### Frustrations

While we found that some artists actively archive their work, we suspect that many more do not. Our discussions with researchers and artists have revealed the frustrations that result from nonexistent or incomplete studio archives. It is important in working with artists to know that documentation means different things to different people. Some artists have trouble identifying what researchers and curators might find important or do not think they are research-worthy. Responding to a survey that we conducted, the artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith stated, "Artists don't realize that when they are no longer here they are easily forgotten and some (artists) simply don't care. They want to enjoy making their work while they're alive and don't care what happens when they pass. This attitude is more common than you might think. Many also express the fact that they aren't Georgia O'Keeffe or Susan Rothenberg, so no one will care anyway."

### Loss of critical information

Valuable information about the artist and their work is lost when they do not maintain their studio archives. It is not uncommon for artists to rely on galleries to track the sales of their work. However, galleries may not share detailed information about the buyer of the work, which leads to problems in tracking provenance, both for the artist and for the art historian or researcher.

### **Advantages to Keeping Archives**

We have observed that artists who have some kind of organizational structure in place to manage their archives are able to run their businesses more efficiently simply by having ready access to the documentation they need in order to market and sell their work. Studio archives also give artists more control over their legacy and estate. As Cai's assistant noted, "The archives has to blend in with the working functions of the studio..."

When artists maintain their own archives as part of their regular practice, there is an opportunity for increased visibility and dialogue with others. Having the studio organized and accessible helps to facilitate dialogues with curators, art historians, journalists, students, the press, and anyone else that might need information, without greatly impacting the artist's creative time.

Using tools such as web sites, an artist can make visible information that could only be accessed by visiting their studio. With a grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation CALL program, the artist Harmony Hammond has been organizing her

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archive online for the world to explore. Her meticulous recording of her artistic practice acts as a preliminary and accurate source of information for students and researchers.

As it has been pointed out in this and in previous presentations at this symposium, another way artists can use documentation is to help them replicate a process used to create a past work of art. One artist's printmaking archive was so well organized that he had extensive notes about the plates, materials and paper used. These notes detailed the processes he used, down to the wiping of metal plates after inking. This illustrates how a well-documented archive can also free an artist's time to reconstruct a work without having to remember the details of how it was originally created. If there is a process that an artist just loved, it can be documented so that they can use it again without trying to remember all the details.

### **A Growing Community of Practice**

With this project we hope to contribute to a growing community of practice that is committed to managing artists' archives. We have recently gained two new partners on the project. Joan Beaudoin, Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science at Wayne State, specializes in digital curation and visual resources. Neal Ambrose-Smith, an artist who has worked with the Joan Mitchell Foundation to create an archives database and workbook for artists, is the fourth partner on this project. As art information professionals, we hope that this project will help develop a collaborative relationship between the studio arts community and information professionals. We will continue to visit artist's studios in order to gain further understanding of their needs and welcome your input as well. We also look forward to connecting with others in the community as we continue to explore these archives.

## Winnowing with George Herms: Lessons for Collaboration Between Archivists and Artists

Andra Darlington, Head of Special Collections Cataloging and Metadata, The Getty Research Institute

From 2006 to 2010 the Getty Research Institute (GRI) collaborated with assemblage artist George Herms on a project that evolved in two phases with varying degrees of success. First was the “knowledge capture” phase, intended to gather information about Herms and the Los Angeles art scene from the 1950s to the present. Using his records to spark Herms’ memory, the GRI conducted an unconventional, unstructured oral history. During the second phase, Herms collaborated with GRI staff on the archival processing of his records. I will describe each phase of the project and discuss what worked and what did not. Based on these lessons, I will conclude by proposing a framework for future processing and knowledge-capture collaborations between archivists and artists.

### George Herms and His Archive

George Herms was born in California in 1935 and has made the state his home ever since. Throughout his career, which began in the 1950s, Herms has constructed assemblages that transform discarded, disheveled materials into poetic objects. For example, his anthropomorphic piece, *The Librarian* (1960), is made from old books found in a dump in Larkspur, California. By his own admission, Herms has not thrown anything away in 50 years.<sup>1</sup> Instead, he has lovingly gathered enough material to fill more than 200 large boxes, packed indiscriminately with artworks, books, letters, ephemera, clippings, manuscripts, photographs and found objects, in no particular order.

The condition of Herms’ papers when they arrived at the GRI reflected his transient lifestyle. Due to frequent financial hardship, Herms moved countless times. For the most part, his papers survived these repeated relocations, but suffered the effects of floods, evictions, pests, dispersion, and brief periods of outdoor storage; which were evident in the form of water damage, mold, yellowed and brittle paper, rust, animal droppings and dead insects. Yet within the weathered chaos of his papers is a thorough record of Herms’ career and his relationship to the Los Angeles art scene. In addition to documentation of his own exhibitions and artworks, Herms also kept artwork given to him by his many artist friends, as well as announcements

for their exhibitions. Without intending to, Herms developed a vast collection of Southern California art and art-related ephemera.<sup>2</sup>

Herms’ papers have provided inspiration and raw material for his artwork. To Herms, every scrap has poetic potential and he has frequently mined his papers for bits of poetry, photographs, ephemera and clippings to incorporate into his assemblages.

His 1992 piece, *Pandora’s Box*, includes two photographs and a fragment of a letter addressed to Herms, among many other materials. He has described his archives as a “conceptual compost heap”<sup>3</sup> where ordinary byproducts of everyday life are also a rich and potent fertilizer for his imagination. In an interview from the 1990s, Herms noted “the continuing battle to keep together a body of what I consider to be raw material for my collages.”<sup>4</sup> The use of his own papers in his work contributes to the highly personal, if also enigmatic, nature of his art. As one critic wrote, “it takes knowing Herms to fully understand his work, for here is an artist not afraid to implicate his life in his art.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Herms seems to equate his artwork with his archives, as suggested by the titles of two retrospective exhibitions, 1979’s *The Prometheus Archives* and 1992’s *Secret Archives*.

Herms’ work is also concerned with the formal elements of found objects. Art historian Thomas Garver argues that Herms’ constructions are more formal than associative. Garver likens Herms to Jasper Johns in the sense that he selects objects that have a “strong history of prior association,” but uses them in such a way that the constructed elements erode the association rather than reinforcing it.<sup>6</sup> Garver points to a series Herms created with parts from a disassembled Packard automobile. In *Distributor Insect* (1962), the car’s distributor and spark plug wires are spidery forms cast against a carefully composed ground of worn wood. One consequence of Herms’ formal approach to found objects is that many materials in his papers are there simply because he liked them, and have no apparent relation to the functions and activities that normally inform archival arrangement.

<sup>1</sup> LA Weekly, July 11, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Several pieces from the George Herms papers were included in the recent exhibition, *Greetings from L.A.*, curated by John Tain and held at the GRI from October 1, 2011 to February 5, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished paper by Sarah Anderson.

<sup>4</sup> Oral history interview with George Herms, 1993 Dec. 8, 10, 13-1994 Mar 10, Archives of American Art (available online: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-george-herms-12275>)

<sup>5</sup> Melissa Lo, “George Herms,” *Flash Art*, May/June 2005, p. 146

<sup>6</sup> Thomas H. Garver, “The Art of George Herms: Options, Accommodations and Survival,” in *The Prometheus Archives: A Retrospective Exhibition of the Works of George Herms*. (Newport Beach: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1979), 22.

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### Phase I: Knowledge Capture

The first phase of the GRI's collaboration with Herms was devised as an experiment in "knowledge capture." The Chief of Knowledge Management at the time was interested in what he called "meta-archiving." This did not involve archivists, nor was it based on archival theory. Instead, the goal was to explore "asynchronous dialog" in non-traditional ways.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in 2006, Herms was provided with an office at the GRI, a Research Assistant, and two video cameras. His papers were moved to his office from various locations throughout Los Angeles, but the GRI did not acquire the collection at that time. Working with Research Assistant Sarah Anderson one or two days a week, Herms opened boxes at random and identified the contents one piece at a time. The process was very slow because Herms took his time and reminisced about items in the collection, drawing on his surprisingly vivid memory of long-past events.

Herms' Research Assistant re-housed the materials in clean but mostly non-archival containers and added them to an item-level inventory. As they worked, they also identified and separated materials that would not be retained in the archival collection. Herms called this process "winnowing," but it might sound to an archivist a lot like archival appraisal. In fact, this was an unusual instance in which the creator essentially appraised his own records. He determined what was in scope and what was out of scope. We were not aware of the basis for most of his appraisal decisions, but Herms did have some guidelines from an archivist at the GRI. For example, he removed envelopes if the information on them duplicated information in the letters they contained. Herms subsequently created a series of assemblage sculptures called *The Winnowed*. A piece exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2011 is composed of hundreds of envelopes and other materials that were weeded from Herms' papers.

The primary objective of the first phase of the project was to capture rich contextual information on videotape. Two cameras were set up in Herms' office with one focused on him and the other with an overhead view of his desk. Using his papers to spark his memory, Herms recounted a personal history of the Los Angeles art scene from the Beat years to the present. In one clip, he draws a map of Topanga Canyon, a mountainous area in Los Angeles that in the 1960s was home to an eclectic group of artists, musicians and actors. Herms indicates on the map where he lived in relation to Wallace and Shirley Berman, James Gill, Russ Tamblyn and others. That clip is an example of exactly the sort of "knowledge capture" that was the goal of the project. However, these moments occur only sporadically in many hours of video. Because Herms was responding to archival material without any order, the historical account recorded on the video is very disjointed. For long stretches one hears only the shuffling sound of the winnowing process.

This first phase of collaboration lasted almost two years. Herms and his Research Assistant went through 86 of the 200 boxes. They produced about 300 hours of video and a 200-page inventory, but the collection remained in a state of complete disorder. Although the inventory was detailed, the lack of arrangement made it difficult to find anything. If researchers knew what they were looking for, they could conduct a keyword search of the inventory to locate relevant materials scattered throughout the collection. But the inventory was too long and disorganized for browsing. Because the video is as unstructured as the inventory and the papers themselves, it is also difficult to use for research purposes. Finding relevant video clips is very time consuming. If Herms had continued with this approach it would have taken him another two and a half years to work through the remaining 114 boxes, and the resulting inventory would have exceeded 500 unwieldy pages. Instead, with encouragement from the GRI, Herms began to consider organizing his papers.

### Phase II: Archival Processing

In 2008, Herms identified several categories for his papers. He and his Research Assistant arranged about 30 boxes of material and created a hierarchical inventory. Because they were organizing the materials, their inventory of 30 boxes was a mere six pages long. A comparison of the 200-page item-level inventory from the first phase of the collaboration with the six-page inventory from the second phase clearly demonstrates the benefits of hierarchical arrangement and description in terms of both efficiency and accessibility. At this point, Herms donated his papers to the GRI and a trained archival processing team, led by Senior Cataloger Annette Leddy, took over. In addition to Herms' own categories, they identified other series based on an examination of the materials and conversations with Herms about his work process and other activities. The final arrangement plan included typical series for artists' records, such as correspondence and project files, as well as some series unique to Herms.

In the 1960s Herms purchased a small hand press that he named The LOVE Press and began publishing woodcuts and books of poetry. Over the years he has published work by such poets as Michael McClure, Diane diPrima and Jack Hirschman, as well as his own poetry. Examples of these handmade publications might have been dispersed among the Project and Artist files, but because of Herms' input they are instead filed in a LOVE Press series. Another series contains materials related to Tap City Circus, a sporadic series of events that were part performance art and part fund-raiser. "Tap City" was Beatnik slang for broke, and Herms organized his circus whenever he was in financial need. He printed announcements on the Love Press, which were artworks in their own right, and sent them

<sup>7</sup> Tom Moritz, Associate Director and Chief, Knowledge Management, Getty Research Institute, in an email on 8/31/2006.

to all his friends. At each Tap City Circus event Herms raffled off his belongings and other prizes to the attendees. These might have been filed with Projects or even Ephemera, but in speaking with Herms it became clear that the Tap City Circus warranted its own series. The Clippings series contains the expected articles about Herms and his work, but there are also clippings filed under Research Materials. The research topics in this series would not have been apparent to an archivist without Herms' input. For example, one topic is "heroes." These are articles about people who inspired Herms. Some are public figures, some are not. The topic is far too subjective for an archivist to recognize without Herms. The research materials that could not be identified with a specific subject are arranged in a chronological subseries.

In eight months the three-person processing team re-housed the entire collection into archival containers, arranged the materials into the series identified with Herms, and wrote a finding aid in Archivists' Toolkit (<http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifa2009m20>). The extent of the processed collection is 232 linear feet, housed in 380 boxes and 65 flat-file folders. The processing team met several times with Herms to ask questions and identify items. During these meetings Herms filled in some gaps in his biography, helped the team decide where to file materials that could logically fit in more than one series, and answered a question that comes up frequently when processing artists' records: "Is it art?"

Although it is now possible to locate and identify materials with relative ease, the video created during Phase I no longer functions as an index to the collection. It still contains valuable information and provides thorough documentation of an extraordinary archival collection in its unprocessed state. However, because the structure of the video does not correspond to the new arrangement of the collection, it is not as effective for providing context as it was intended to be. The video would be a far more powerful research tool if it had been made after the collection was arranged and described. If Herms had had a finding aid to help him select materials related to a particular event, person or period of time, the video would flow better as a personal history. And if the materials discussed in it could be identified by box number, the video would be an invaluable tool to supplement the finding aid with rich contextual information about specific items and groups of items in the collection.

### Conclusion: Applying Lessons to Future Collaborations

An honest evaluation of our collaboration with George Herms – its failures as well as successes – suggests a simple framework for future processing collaborations with artists. The first step is documentation of the unprocessed collection. The GRI has not consistently documented archives *in situ* or as they are accessioned, but when we have such images they have proven valu-

able for researchers who want to know more about the creator's process, and for us as a tool for explaining and justifying what we do. Second is a focused preliminary interview with the artist. This step is particularly important if the papers are not in any apparent original order, or if little biographical information has been published about the artist. A structured discussion of the artist's personal history, creative process and other professional activities can inform appraisal and arrangement decisions. It is also useful to have follow-up meetings with the artist during the course of processing. Questions inevitably arise that are best resolved by the creator.

Finally, when processing is completed, the finding aid may be supplemented by "knowledge capture" activities. The finding aid can provide a structure for these activities and facilitate a more focused approach to personal historiography. At the GRI, curator John Tain has conducted interviews with Herms using a selection of collection materials as both visual aid and memory aid. The result is a more succinct and usable video than the 300 hours produced during Phase I of the collaboration. A clip of the video is available on the Getty website: <http://www.getty.edu/pacificstandardtime/explore-the-era/archives/v14/>. Such "knowledge capture" activities can take almost any form, and can be organized by almost anyone. However, archival processing should precede such activities to ensure that enhanced contextual information points back to the materials themselves in a logical, usable manner. In short, as we learned the hard way at the GRI, "archiving" must come before "meta-archiving."

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### Archiving the Artist-run Movement in Canada

Marilyn Nazar, University of Toronto

The artist-run movement has played a vital role in contemporary Canadian art. This is evidenced by the current retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), of Canada's most significant artist collective, General Idea, and the recent retrospective exhibition of another influential Toronto-based artist collective, *ChromaZone*, at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art in Toronto. Both exhibitions speak to a growing need and desire both from within and outside the artist-run community to document its significant 40+ year history.

Furthermore, projects such as Vincent Bonin's (2010) *Documentary Protocols*, a two-year project resulting in two exhibitions and a publication, raise important questions about the nature of archival practice in relation to the collective memory of the artist-run movement. Specifically, this project interrogates the role of the public archive in chronicling its recorded history. Using the administrative, artistic and exhibition records, and memory texts of some of the most influential artist-run organizations in Canada, this project recreates new and analyzes existing documentary narratives around the collective identity and memory of the artist-run movement.

In contrast, *A Documentation of Artist Initiated Collectives and Collective Galleries in Toronto (Artist Initiated Collectives)* consists of a series of recorded interviews with members of artist collectives operating during the late 1980s to the present. Inter-cut with digitized images of press releases, posters, invitations, catalogue images, and photographs derived from the personal papers of individual collective members, these hour-long segments are being edited down to five minute documentaries on each collective. These will, in turn, be launched in fall 2011 on the web-based research Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art ([www.ccca.ca](http://www.ccca.ca)). Unlike Bonin (who while critical of the role of the public archives in the preservation of original archival materials still greatly values their contribution), Richard Mongiat and Bill Sylvestre (the two artists responsible for the *Artist Initiated Collectives* and founding members of collectives established during this time period) reject the more traditional practices of public archives in favour of those that are more community-based and artist-driven.<sup>1</sup>

From *General Idea* artist AA Bronson's catalogue essay "From Sea to Shining Sea" (1987), to artist and artist-run center ad-

ministrator Clive Robertson's doctoral thesis *Movement + Apparatus: A Cultural Policy Study of Artist-Run Culture in Canada (1976 – 1994)* (2004) (as well as his 2006 publication *Policy Matters: Administration of Art and Culture*), much of the heterogeneous and experimental nature of the artist-run culture has been well documented, as has its complex relationship to established cultural institutions and funding bodies.<sup>2</sup> However, until recently, little has been discussed about the archival practices of the artist-run community. This paper seeks to explore current practices within the community archives of the artist-run culture. Moreover, it examines the nature of these collections, the level of independence from more traditional public archival institutions, and the movement's motivations for archiving and accessing its archival materials in relation to preserving its collective identity and memory.<sup>3</sup> Finally it looks at the possibility of participatory archival practices and the effects of digital technologies on the preservation and access to archival documents as triggers for collective memory.<sup>4</sup>

Research for this paper relies on the current theoretical and critical discourse on community archives prevalent within the archival sciences discipline, some of which has been mentioned above. It also incorporates insights on the alternative artist-run movement and its archival collections drawn from critical essays in Vincent Bonin's 2010 publication *Documentary Protocols* and Ryan Evan's 2011 presentation "On Re-housing Special Collections of the Alternative Spaces" at the 38th annual conference of the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS). In the course of researching this paper, two key interviews were conducted with Richard Mongiat and Bill Sylvestre as active and formative members of this community in order to gain insight into the particular motivations, objectives and processes of their *Artist Initiated Collectives* as well as their knowledge of the historical documentation of the artist-run culture. An interview was also conducted with the special collections archivist at the AGO, Amy Furness (one of the main archival repositories currently housing collections from this community), in order to better understand the current role of an archival institution in preserving this documentation and its relationship to the artist-run community. Clearly, a more in-depth analysis than what can be achieved here would require a

<sup>1</sup> Taken from interviews with Richard Mongiat and Bill Sylvestre, of the *A Documentation of Artist Initiated Collectives and Collective Galleries in Toronto*, conducted July 18 and July 22, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Vincent Bonin, "Documentary Protocols (1967-1975)," in *Documentary Protocols (1967-1975)*, ed. Vincent Bonin (Montreal: Concordia University, 2010), 6-16.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Flinn, "The impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice," in *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping: A Reader*, ed. Jennie Hill (London: Facet, 2011), 148.

<sup>4</sup> Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, "Participatory appraisal and arrangement for multicultural archival collections," *Archivaria* 63 (2007): 87-101.; Isto Huvila, "Participatory archive: Towards decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualization of records management," *Archival Science* 8, no. 1 (2008): 15-36.; José van Dijk, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 27-52.; Margaret Hedstrom, "Archives, memory, and interfaces with the past," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 21-43.

more formalized and comprehensive qualitative research methodology that incorporates interviews with a wider sampling of archivists and artists engaged in the preservation of and access to the records of artist-run organizations. Indeed, this research would be timely and very relevant to the current archival practices of this community.

### The Artist-Run Culture as a Community

The definition of what is meant by “community” varies across disciplines and discourses.<sup>5</sup> Within archival discourse, a community is defined by its shared past,<sup>6</sup> on the one hand, and a shared identity in opposition to or “in contrast to perceived others” on the other.<sup>7</sup> Whether referred to as counter, alternative or marginalized publics or communities,<sup>8</sup> a key ingredient is the process of “self”-identification. As such, a community can be “any group of people who come together and present themselves as ” independently of how others might identify them whether their “self”-identification is based on a shared “locality, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, occupation,” interest or combination of these elements.<sup>9</sup>

The artist-run movement (also referred to as the artist-run network, culture, or alternative culture) developed out of a shared interest and occupational concern for art exhibition and production in Canada. In response to an indifferent public gallery and museum system at home, and an elusive international art scene, Canadian artists in the 1960s and 1970s collaborated to create an artist-driven art movement that would provide alternative exhibition and production venues for a generation of emerging artists.<sup>10</sup> The idea was to create spaces (virtual, physical, temporary, permanent) that would encourage experimentation and dialogue around the production, exhibition, curation, and critical discourse of contemporary art from the perspective of the artist; as opposed to that of the curator, art historian or critic or gallery director/owner. This encouraged artists to take on new roles as administrators, curators and even art historians.

Within a community, however, there is the “co-existence of difference and unity.”<sup>11</sup> This is certainly true within the artist-

run community. The first generation of artist-run initiatives, dating from the 1960s through the 1980s, were able to take advantage of large amounts of cultural funding, but this was done at the expense of their independence from mainstream cultural heritage institutions. With funding came increased pressure to regulate their membership, administrative procedures, and records management in order to be accountable for the public funds they received. While still member driven and run, they were quickly becoming more institutionalized and therefore less able to meet the needs of a growing and younger generation of emerging artists. As funding sources dried up, new centers trying to emerge could not get funding.<sup>12</sup> Thus, younger artists now employed in these centers had to reinvent themselves in order to ensure access to viable creative exhibition and production facilities.<sup>13</sup>

Subsequent generations of artist collectives not only continue to resist the “white cube” mentality of traditional mainstream art culture, but also the co-optation and institutionalization of artist-run centers.<sup>14</sup> Much more fluid in nature, these collectives tend to be even more collaborative and member-driven, diverse in organizational structure and less tied to a physical space. Unable to access core operational funding, they are not bound by the same regulatory requirements of artist-run centers, and therefore are not required to maintain the same level of administrative records about their activities. As many collectives are not limited to any single space, their records are often dispersed among collective members. Their level of autonomy from mainstream cultural institutions is generally much greater; some collectives refuse to seek any public funding or exhibit in any type of traditional gallery or museum space (opting instead for exhibitions in abandoned buildings, office buildings, parks, churches, etc.), while others actively seek either operational funding on a project-by-project basis and/or apply to exhibit within established public galleries and museums.<sup>15</sup> While sharing similar values and histories, collectives lack the same “solidified group cohesion,” and external recognition of their artist-run center counterparts, and may be more in tune with “emergent publics” than communities.<sup>16</sup> However, efforts are

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, “Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream,” *Archival Science*, 9 (2009): 74.; Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland, and Eric Ketelaar, “‘Communities of memory’: pluralising archival research and education agendas,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 (2005): 150.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Ketelaar, “Sharing: collected memories in communities of records,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 (2005), 54.

<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth Kaplan, “We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity,” *American Archivist* 63:1 (2000), 128.

<sup>8</sup> Shaunna Moore and Susan Pell, “Autonomous archives,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, no.4-5 (2010): 255–268, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527251003775513>.

<sup>9</sup> Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd, “Whose memories,” 75.

<sup>10</sup> Bonin, “Documentary Protocols,” 18.

<sup>11</sup> Kaplan, “We Are What We Collect,” 128.

<sup>12</sup> Clive Robertson, *Policy Matters, Administrations of Art and Culture*. (Toronto: YYZBOOKS, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Ryan Evans, “On Re-Housing Special Collections of the Alternative Spaces” (paper presented at the 38th annual conference proceedings of Art Libraries Society of North America. Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 24–28, 2011), [http://www.arlisna.org/news/conferences/2011/proceed\\_index.html](http://www.arlisna.org/news/conferences/2011/proceed_index.html).

<sup>14</sup> Bonin, “Documentary Protocols,” 6–16.

<sup>15</sup> Taken from interviews with Richard Mongiat and Bill Sylvestre, of the *Artist Initiated Collectives*, conducted July 18 and July 22, 2011.

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increasingly being made to incorporate collectives into the organizational network of the artist-run centers.<sup>17</sup>

### Scope and Content: Archival Practices of the Artist-Run Movement

Whether one views archives and archival records as only a “sliver of a sliver of a sliver” of what shapes the collective memory of a community,<sup>18</sup> or as wielding greater power over the shaping and directing of historical scholarship and collective memory,<sup>19</sup> what distinguishes community archives from more mainstream archival institutions lies in the nature of their collections, the level of independence and control they exercise over those collections, and their motivation or objectives.<sup>20</sup> While the degree of independence from mainstream cultural institutions may vary from total autonomy to the housing of records within an established repository with minimal participation in the appraisal arrangement and description of those records, a defining characteristic is “the active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history of their particular community.”<sup>21</sup>

While driven by the need to “critique the dominant narratives” of the mainstream art world and “ensure that the diversity of their experiences” be represented within the broader framework of contemporary Canadian art, artist-run organizations were also initially motivated to archive their administrative, artist, exhibition and production records, and memorabilia in order to ensure its preservation and accessibility in the face of a resurgent interest in their history.<sup>22</sup> For example, ASpace, one of the first artist-run centers, chose to house its records with the AGO, in part, to commemorate its 25th anniversary exhibition celebration at the AGO in 1996, but also to meet the growing demand for access on the part of art historians that they could no longer accommodate.<sup>23</sup> In the midst of a more recent widespread interest in, and perhaps co-opting of the documents and archival holdings of the artist-run movement by the “institutional apparatus of contemporary art,” there is a similar movement to document and archive its history from

within the community.<sup>24</sup> For example, the Centre for Canadian Contemporary Art (CCCCA) currently houses a virtual archive of the *ChromaZone* collective. As mentioned above, this site will also house the virtual documentary narratives of a host of other artist collectives from the 1990s to the present, including digital surrogates of their archival documentation, courtesy of Mongiat and Sylvestre’s *Artist Initiated Collectives*.

Although Bonin argues that the 1990s saw many artist-run organizations “bestowing their archives to public museums and other heritage preservation societies,” far fewer found permanent homes for their materials.<sup>25</sup> While the records of the now disbanded Véhicule Art (Montréal) Inc. were rescued from near destruction by Concordia University’s archives,<sup>26</sup> and General Idea’s records (along with a collection of artist publications, videos and assorted “by-products of conceptual practices” amassed by Art Metropole) found their way into the permanent collection of the National Gallery by 1999,<sup>27</sup> those of *ChromaZone*, have only recently made their way onto the CCCC website through the efforts of one of its founding members. Part of the reason for the dearth of artist-run archives is the growing resistance to public institutions. In addition, as with many other community archive practices, not only does the archival material not fit into a strict definition of what a record should be, but traditional archival standards and practices are also not firmly adhered to.<sup>28</sup> Initially, for example, even General Idea arranged to archive its own records, albeit not according to the standards of archival description.<sup>29</sup>

Given the conceptual nature of the art practices of most artist-run ventures, what is more apt to happen is the reconstituting of archival records into art projects, as is the case with Bonin’s own *Documentary Protocols* art installations and the *Artist Initiated Collectives*. This confirms Flinn’s notion that a community changes definitions of what is archival material.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it is the act of collecting (and reconstructing) that is driving the need to preserve and create access to archival documents and the artist-run community’s collective history, rather than the originality and uniqueness of the materials themselves.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Moore and Pell, “Autonomous archives,” 257.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the Association of Artist-run Centres and Collectives of Ontario, initially known as the Association of Artist-run Centres of Ontario, now includes collectives within its membership.

<sup>18</sup> Harris, 2002, 65.

<sup>19</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, records, and power: the making of modern memory,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 2, [http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/13890166/v2i1-2/1\\_arapmmomm](http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/13890166/v2i1-2/1_arapmmomm).

<sup>20</sup> Flinn, “The impact of independent and community archives,” 149.

<sup>21</sup> Flinn, Stevens, and Shepherd, “Whose memories,” 73.; Flinn, “The impact of independent and community archives,” 145-169.; Moore and Pell, “Autonomous archives,” 258.

<sup>22</sup> Moore and Pell, “Autonomous archives,” 258.

<sup>23</sup> Taken from the administrative file of the ASpace fonds, File A1759, from the Art Gallery of Ontario special collections archive.

<sup>24</sup> Michèle Thériault, “Exhibiting Research,” in *Documentary Protocols (1967-1975)*, ed. Vincent Bonin (Montreal: Concordia University, 2010), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Bonin, “Documentary Protocols,” 20.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

<sup>28</sup> Flinn, “The impact of independent and community archives,” 145-169.

<sup>29</sup> Bonin, “Documentary Protocols,” 54.

<sup>30</sup> Flinn, “The impact of independent and community archives,” 149.

Bonin, in fact, outlines his process of first encasing photocopies of archival materials in display cases, then making several additional copies available in binders, as a way of addressing the archival concepts of originality, authenticity and uniqueness of materials.<sup>32</sup>

Due to the limited resources of many groups within the artist-run movement, many operating on a strictly volunteer basis, it is difficult to channel scarce resources into archiving their administrative records and other documentation. This might account for the lack of collective will on the part of artist-run centers to preserve their historical records. Their need to constantly reinvent themselves in response to the changing needs and tastes of the art world, their members, audiences, and supporters, as well as advancements in technology and the “cyclical ebb and flow of the economy,” has meant that while they share memories of a collective past, and are driven to recreate it, they remain fixed in the present.<sup>33</sup> Conversely, while cultural heritage institutions such as public archives have broadened their mandates to incorporate the fonds of artist collectives and artist-run centers, and are interested in capturing this history through their various documents, they also lack the resources to appraise, arrange, and describe these fonds and to seek out collections, especially among the more effusive artist collectives. Often they are accepting these records without the formal arrangements usually made between donors and archival repositories. Indeed, the decision to collect a set of records is not only up to the archivist in these institutions, but also is frequently made by committee.<sup>34</sup> Hence, records of these organizations often make their way into public archives via the personal papers of individual artist members who have made a significant enough contribution to the contemporary art community at large. This has resulted in these records being dispersed over possibly several different fonds and/or remaining incomplete.

### Towards a Participatory Model

The “mediated memory objects,” photographs, videos, recordings, artist documentation, ephemera, and administrative records of the artist-run movement are fragile, if not properly preserved, as are the collective memories they trigger. However, as van Dijck reminds us, “memory is always a creative act in-

involved in communication as much as reflection.”<sup>35</sup> It is perhaps also true that solutions to preserving the archival memory of the artist-run movement also need to incorporate creative acts. While electronic and digital technologies probe the boundaries of memory and object,<sup>36</sup> destabilize our concept of records, and challenge our ability to capture, represent, and preserve this information,<sup>37</sup> they have opened up possibilities for the artist-run movement to once again reinvent itself in the role of archivist/historian and create its own digital archives. As with the diverse range of documents that permeate the collections of community archives, the “evolving nature of digital documents” along with the “broader formulations of memory, and postmodern influences,” encourage a more “open and expansive view of what constitutes records and archives.”<sup>38</sup>

The creativity of projects such as *Artist Initiated Collectives*, of the online research Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, and other projects such as that of New York’s White Columns artist collective online archive (which uses a software called Collective Access),<sup>39</sup> attest to the artist-run community’s ability to engage creatively with the archiving and documentation of its own history. Havila and his proposal for a participatory archive that incorporates a “radical user orientation” pushes the definitions of archival practice even further by proposing participants who both contribute to and use the archive.<sup>40</sup> In this way, Havila argues, new communities and contexts can take form within the archive, rather than as predetermined entities. For a culture constantly bent on reinventing itself, radical user orientation and a participatory archival model would provide yet another forum for the already collaborative nature of the artist-run community, as well as another venue for the creative reconstitution of its own collective memory and identity. This model relies on the participatory nature of a community such as the artist collective to provide “enough contextual information on records and their descriptions so that the content is independently understandable.”<sup>41</sup>

Bonin’s 2010 project, *Documentary Protocols*, reminds us of the benefits of housing archival records in an established repository. While critical of current archival practices, particularly in regard to access and use of currently housed records of artist-run organizations, he is quick to point out the value

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Bonin, “Documentary Protocols,” 23-24.

<sup>33</sup> Evans, “On Re-housing Special Collections,” 1.

<sup>34</sup> his information is gleaned from the interview mentioned in the introduction with Amy Furness, Special Collections Archivist with the AGO, conducted July 13, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, 51.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret Hedstrom, “Archives, memory, and interfaces with the past,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 22.

<sup>38</sup> Hedstrom, “Archives, memory, and interfaces,” 25.

<sup>39</sup> Evans, “On Re-housing Special Collections,” 6.

<sup>40</sup> Isto Havila, “Participatory archive: Towards decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualization of records management,” *Archival Science* 8, no. 1 (2008): 30.

<sup>41</sup> Havila, “Participatory archive,” 28.

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of established repositories in performing a “house arrest” on the decay of such records.<sup>42</sup> The use of these documents to create and recreate narratives of an artist-run movement rich and deep with collective memory, knowledge, and meaning confirms Flinn’s belief in the potential of involving community members in the process of archival description.<sup>43</sup> Shilton and Srinivasan develop this idea further by proposing a “re-envisioning” of archival principles of appraisal, arrangement and description “to facilitate the preservation of representative, empowered narratives.”<sup>44</sup> Recognizing that “documents lose elements of their meaning” when separated from the context of their creation, Shilton and Srinivasan propose a return to the privileging of the document creators in arrangement, and description over the more current move towards subject-based arrangement in order to ensure the integrity of these narratives and contexts.<sup>45</sup> Of course, the concept of

provenance as either individual or corporate also needs to be broadened to incorporate “divergent, culturally-specific definitions of authorship.”<sup>46</sup>

Shilton and Srinivasan conclude that “newer forms of electronic archiving restore the deep link of the archive to popular memory.”<sup>47</sup> What needs to take place is the reconstitution and application of traditional archival principles within the community practices of the artist-run movement, whether incorporating digital technologies or not. Perhaps a model in which control over, and initiation of, archival process remains within the community, but is supported by cultural heritage institutions, would help build bridges between the artist-run community and the mainstream art world. This, in turn, would enable the better use of the scarce resources available for the documenting of its history.

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<sup>42</sup> Bonin, “Documentary Protocols,” 20.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Flinn, “An attack on professionalism and scholarship?: democratising archives and the production of knowledge,” *Ariadne* 62 (2010), <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue62/flinn/>.

<sup>44</sup> Shilton and Srinivasan, “Participatory Appraisal,” 90.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

# Building the Archives: Collaboration between Artist and Archivist in Collection Development

Mark Vajcner, University of Regina

## Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank the symposium organizers, funders, and presenters for an excellent symposium. My talk will focus on the collaboration between artist and archivist at the University of Regina. This collaboration has been an implicit part of our collection development strategy for many years and today it is being strengthened and affirmed by our institution's recent forays into archival digitization. In our experience, artists, to a far greater degree than any other type of donor, have been willing to work extensively with archival repositories to document their art, processes, and community. We find that our artist donors have a clear understanding of the historical nature of archives and immediately understand the role of archives in documenting the past. I will speak to the development of our collection and our efforts to digitize existing archival records. But first some background on our institution and its connection to the arts.

## Background on the University of Regina

The University of Regina and its predecessor Regina College have a remarkable visual arts legacy. The first courses in art were offered in 1916 at the College, then a small residential high school run by the Methodist Church. Annual workshops for artists were initiated in 1955 at Emma Lake in northern Saskatchewan. The workshops were intensive two-week sessions held in the summer and led each year by a different prominent artist from outside the province. Jack Shadbolt led the first workshop. Instructors such as New York art critic Clement Greenberg and artists Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski attracted international attention to the workshops. Minoru Yamasaki, who designed the new Campus of the University of Regina in the early 1960s and would go on to design such seminal structures as the World Trade Center here in New York, remarked that when he got off the plane in Regina "all I saw was the thin straight line of the horizon. That and the color of the sky. Nothing else. Then I met with all these vibrant, audacious people – from ministers to officials to educationalist to artists – who so believed in the creation of a haven of beauty and enlightenment on the flat prairies. I was caught up by their enthusiasm and I wanted to help."<sup>1</sup> In true western fashion, there was a sense of possibility, of new beginnings, and of exuberance that permeated all aspects of life, including the arts.

The workshops were, in part, the inspiration of Kenneth Lochhead, who was only 24 years old when he was appointed

as Director of the College's School of Art. His desire was to expose his students to what was going on in the broader visual arts community. The Emma Lake workshops gained an international reputation. Attended by students from across North America and Europe, they had a profound impact on those artists from Saskatchewan who attended. "There is no question" Ernest Lindner later wrote, "that the artists' seminars at Emma Lake have caused the most important upsurge of creative work in those who participated. The intimate contact with contemporary New York artists of first rank, and especially with the eminent art critic Clement Greenberg has been simply invaluable to all of us who took part in these seminars."<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the Emma Lake workshops, Lochhead began assembling a faculty at the School of Art that would make a mark on the Canadian and North American art scenes. This included Ron Bloore, Ted Godwin, Arthur McKay, and Doug Morton. Together with Lochhead they would gain national attention when featured in a 1961 National Gallery of Canada exhibition entitled *Five Painters from Regina*. At that time, all five were considered to be at the forefront of Canada's modern art movement. Earlier their *Win Hedore* show – which featured the work of a brilliant, but supposedly recluse new artist – caused a sensation when it was discovered that the artist, Win Hedore, was fictional and that the works were created by three of the five painters. Even *Time* magazine covered the story.<sup>3</sup>

## Collecting

When Archives and Special Collections began its visual arts collecting program in 1985 and 1986, the records of the Regina Five were among the first to be acquired. The University Librarian and University Archivist coordinated several significant deposits of records from four of the five: the fifth, Arthur McKay, is reputed to have burned his papers. The process of acquisition involved dialogue between the artists and the University Archivist, as the correspondence in the donor files suggests. Detailed questions about the donation process, the value of certain kinds of records (both monetary and historical), the organization of archives, and the uses to which they are put were raised. These artists, as others afterwards, were keenly aware that they were engaging in a process of documenting themselves for posterity. The correspondence clearly shows that they cared about this and trusted the University Archivist to best advise them on archival matters. They became friends, exchanging letters and visits long after the donation process

<sup>1</sup> Pitsula, James. *Art and Music at the University of Regina: The Centennial Legacy* (2011) <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/ReginaCollegeHistory/lecture.jsp>.

<sup>2</sup> Johnston, Naoise M. *Saskatchewan and the Visual Arts* (2001) <http://scaa.sk.ca/gallery/art/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Time Magazine* (Canadian edition), 7 November 1960.

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was complete. In some instances, it seems that my predecessor became their confessor. It must have been difficult for her to convince some artists that all of their documents – not just the flattering ones – were part of the record and served to tell their story. Some materials were undoubtedly culled before transit to the archives but others were not and significant restrictions to their use were set: at times by the donor and at times by the archivist.

As the collections grew, artists began approaching the archives of their own accord. The word was spreading about what the archives was doing and deposited materials were being used by graduate students, curators, documentary filmmakers, and others with an interest in the history of Saskatchewan art. Artists were referring their colleagues to the archives. Soon a network of artists and art galleries was informally advising Archives and Special Collections on how best to document the visual arts community in Saskatchewan. Artists' archives from Manitoba, our neighbor province to the east, began to make their way to Archives and Special Collections, causing so much consternation about the loss of cultural legacy that questions were raised on the floor of Manitoba's legislative assembly about archival materials going to Regina.

### Digitization

More recently, the collaboration between artist and archivist has expanded to the digitization of archival materials. The original concept for this expansion came to us from a curator. Terrence Heath is a freelance writer, consultant, and curator who, in his past life, was an Associate Professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan and later Director of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Completing work on a major retrospective show on Joe Fafard, Heath approached Archives and Special Collections in 2005 and proposed that the archives digitize Fafard's extensive slide collection as a step toward creating an online "research center" of his work. This online research center would allow for serious scholarship and was envisioned as aggregating the material of archives, galleries, and other institutions and individuals.

An internationally acclaimed artist and sculptor, Fafard is one of Canada's leading professional visual artists and has exhibited his work in galleries and museums across the country and around the world. Much of his early sculpture used clay, then, in 1985, he shifted to bronze as his chief sculptural medium. Successfully establishing a foundry in Pense, a small town in Saskatchewan, Fafard portrays his neighbors, farm animals, and famous artists that he came to respect as he learned his craft.

In 2006 and 2007, Archives and Special Collections acquired slides documenting nearly his complete body of work from roughly the mid-1980s to 2002. Over 3,700 slides were received and organized chronologically by project. Fafard's staff

maintained a series of log books that documented project details such as medium of the work, size, number of castings, and purchase information. While these log books were not part of the archival donation, the information in them was recorded by archives staff and formed the basis of the finding aid produced for the slides. Archives and Special Collections is a component of the Library at the University of Regina and, at roughly the same time that the slides were being described, another component of the Library, Access and Systems, began the actual digitization of the slides. High-quality master images were created of each slide using a high-end slide scanner and scanning software capable of producing high-resolution TIFF format files. Master TIFF files at 4000 dpi were created with smaller derivative JPEG files created for eventual display on the Internet.<sup>4</sup>

Numerous staffing and organizational changes at the Library resulted in the project being delayed in 2008. It would be almost three years before Archives and Special Collections was again in a position to devote time and attention to the Fafard slide project. But these were not three years wasted. The University Archivist took an educational leave in Australia in order to learn more about the country's digital archives practices, the Library hired a Digital Collections Administrator with significant technical knowledge appropriate for digitization, and Archives and Special Collections undertook two smaller digitization projects to develop and refine its work processes.

A significant aspect of that process was an understanding of the importance of the context of the original archival materials and conveying that contextual information as accurately and completely as possible in the digital world. Archives have long been concerned with "context" and their very methods of organization, description, and access reflect this. In the past decade, however, archival institutions have tended to forget this key principle when it comes to the new task of digitization. Materials were regularly digitized out of their context and archives routinely failed to refer researchers back to the full body of records. They were not creating electronic research presentations of collections, but were developing web resources more akin to an exhibition, highlighting documents that were perceived as thought-provoking or seminal.<sup>5</sup> While interesting, it could be argued that these archival exhibitions were of little use to a serious researcher.

In his initial approach to Archives and Special Collections, Terrence Heath envisioned something significantly more than a web exhibition of Fafard's slides. The University Archivist, in his reading, study, and work in Australia had become convinced that a logical way to create digital collections of research value would be to replicate digitally the contextual principles that archives follow with non-digital records. Luckily, all the Fafard slides had been scanned in 2006 and 2007, and the ar-

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, Carol. "Digitizing Artist Joe Fafard's Slide Collection." Presentation to Prairie Partnerships: Expanding Our Horizons Conference, Regina, 2 May 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Vajcner, Mark. "Context and Digitization: Towards a New Model for Archives" (2008) <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/325>.

chives staff dutifully recorded the contextual information from his logbooks. Now the task was to devise a system to attach the contextual information to the digitized slides and to create a web presentation that would provide further background information on Fafard and his art.

To this end Archives and Special Collections developed an internal metadata element set for the Fafard slides. This set, based on the elements already used in earlier projects, was supplemented and modified using Dublin Core, PREMIS (a standard for preservation metadata in digital archiving systems), and Categories for the Description of Works of Art from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, CA. Our element set combines descriptive elements for the original art object (the sculpture) with descriptive elements for the archival object (the slide) and technical elements about the scanning process and resulting digital files. Specific elements are designed to record contextual information. In addition to obvious elements, such as artwork medium, edition, date, and measurement, others provide a short biography of Fafard, a brief custodial history, and lists of further readings and related materials. All metadata elements are linked to the digitized image of the slide they describe in the CONTENTdm application utilized by the project. Some elements are also being embedded directly into the JPEG file of the slide to ensure that it may be contextualized should it be separated from the CONTENTdm application. Thus, even if a researcher downloads a single slide and over time forgets its origins, certain contextual information will be available simply by viewing the file's properties.

As the project website develops, it will contain a series of essays introducing researchers to the work of Joe Fafard. These essays provide another point at which artist and archivist collaborate. Heath and other art historians and curators have been approached to prepare these. Ultimately, essays could be available on societal contexts, governmental policy regarding the arts, art technique and processes, and a whole host of other relevant access points. These essays would help researchers go beyond the materials at hand, to the less visible yet complex ideas and trends behind them. A researcher could always go directly to the materials and avoid the essays at will, or choose to read some and ignore others. We are currently also considering audio and video essays in which Fafard can speak about his work and processes and even react to how his materials have been archived, digitized, and presented.

### **Future Directions**

The Fafard project has become the nucleus of a broader effort to digitize art archives in Saskatchewan. Funding has recently been provided to the University of Regina Archives and Special Collections by the province and we are now expanding the project to include archival materials from several significant artists who have been active in Saskatchewan since 1950. At this point these additional materials are being selected and scanned by a masters-level art student at the University. This addition to the project will be presented as a digital exhibition rather than as a digital research collection simply because we are not in a position to undertake a comprehensive digitization of these artists. Nevertheless, the full element set is being used to collect metadata and contextual essays are being planned. We are designing the project to be scalable and we hope in the future to digitize more materials, thus creating several truly online research collections.

### **Conclusions**

I hope that what I have presented today shows, in some part, the collaborative approach to building archival collections employed at the University of Regina. We began these collaborations in 1985 with the acquisition of the records of the Regina Five and have continued to the present day. That collaboration was most noticeable in the field of acquisition, as artists worked with archivists to ensure that their careers were documented. Later artists began to work with other artists to spread the word about the archives and ensure that the local arts community was documented.

Today that collaboration is being strengthened and affirmed by digitization. The experience of the University of Regina has been that artists are receptive to the scanning and online presentation of their archives, and are becoming involved in explaining and interpreting their works and records. For their part, art historians and curators are stepping forward to interpret these digital archives and are providing context to aid researchers, building what promises to be a new and vibrant field of collaboration in the development of the archives.

## SESSION 6

# Artists' Papers in the Age of Electronic Reproduction

## Introduction

Erin Kinhart, Archives of American Art

The three speakers in this session, Artists' Papers in the Age of Electronic Reproduction, are all employees at the Archives of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution. Charles Duncan oversees acquisitions for the New York region and spoke about the challenges of acquiring artists' papers in the 21st century, including donor expectations relative to the digitization of collections. Erin Kinhart is an archivist in the collections processing department and focused her talk on the role of the archivist in providing greater online access to collections, and the challenges experienced when digitizing artists' papers. Megan McShea is an audio-visual archivist and presented on types of film, video, and audio recordings found in artists' papers, their potential research uses, and the Archives' approach to preserving, managing, and providing access to them. All three presenters addressed digitization issues and practices at the Archives of American Art.

## Acquiring Artists' Papers in the 21st Century

Charles Duncan, Archives of American Art

This presentation began with highlights from recent acquisitions at the Archives of American Art, including selections from the Colin de Land papers, Dore Ashton papers, Photo-realist artists, Armory Show records and Jimmy Ernst papers, and offered a general introduction to the Archives of American Art's collecting program in New York. The idea of "aura" as it applies to traditional paper documents was noted through examples of letters from Max Ernst and Leonora Carrington, as well as a 1914 document from the Armory Show. A 1951 telegram from Barnett Newman to historian and collector B.H. Friedman was shown as an early type of "electronic" correspondence and it was posited that while we tend to attach the concept of "aura" to original hardcopy archival documents like this telegram, Newman's hand had no physical role in the creation of this telegram, nor did he most likely ever see the object.

Artistic practice during the latter half of the 20th century increasingly embraced ephemeral and performative approaches and, in turn, collections of artists' papers are now more frequently called upon to serve a central role in the exegesis of visual art. Examples of such practice recorded within the holdings of the Archives of American Art include conceptual artist Robert Schuler's Tethys Project where a series of five hundred pound granite blocks with latitude and longitude inscriptions were dropped into the Atlantic Ocean; and graffiti on the New York City subway system during its period of stylistic evolution in the early 1970s, as photographed by historian and painter Jack Stewart.

The late 20th century also witnessed the explosion of electronic media, with archival formats such as video increasingly informing collections of artists' papers. Presented were the contributions of video artist Paul Ryan, a participant in the

groundbreaking 1969 exhibition *TV as a Creative Medium* at the Howard Wise Gallery and a member of the Raindance media collective, whose seminal journal *Radical Software* was modeled after the *Whole Earth Catalog*. Commonly recognized as a precursor to the Internet, the *Whole Earth Catalog* was conceived as an aggregation of information resources with reader-contributed entries and reviews. As a corollary, the evolution of information models from oral to printed to electronic as posited by Marshall McLuhan in the *Gutenberg Galaxy* can be observed through sweeping changes by archival repositories to accommodate artist-created electronic media, as well as the rapid movement towards dissemination of both hardcopy and electronic archival assets via on-line digitization programs, such as the Archives of American Art's Terra initiative.

To better assess the impact of digitizing archival collections and the overwhelmingly positive response to the Archives of American Art's on-line dissemination program, models outside of the archival realm can be considered for a possible understanding of the future of archival repositories. One example is the evolution of patronage of horse racing in New York State, which at the outset required bettors to be in attendance at racing tracks, then introduced remote wagering from Off-Track betting sites in New York, and now operates within a global model of on-line wagering where profitability is no longer dependent upon actual spectator attendance. In the cultural sphere, virtual participation can be assessed via the simulcast program of the Metropolitan Opera, which generates larger audiences and more total revenue than in-house attendance at its Lincoln Center home. These models suggest that present momentum towards serving archival collections through virtual programs will increasingly be embraced by research users; that such digi-

tization programs may engender a powerful collective voice in determining what types of content receive priority processing; and that scholarly trends may emerge relative to collections and materials that have been afforded on-line accessibility.

While this brave new world of digital, on-line collections programs is expanding rapidly, it is also held in check by the practical realities of collecting and processing archival collections, especially in the case of artists' papers. Issues at hand include copyright and privacy, as well as the challenges of making intellectual determinations about collections at the point of acquisition and negotiating with donors who wish to fast-track archival collections for on-line access. Ultimately it was suggested that decisions regarding possible digitization tracks for recently acquired collections can be best guided by monitoring initial phases of research demand within traditional reference settings.

Digitally born materials offer additional challenges for acquiring and managing artist's papers in the 21st century, yet

on-line collections programs may help to diffuse present confusion about how best to acquire and organize such assets. By considering, at the point of acquisition, how digitally born files may be re-presented within an on-line interface structured upon a finding aid, assessment can be guided by intellectual category—correspondence, photographs, writings, etc.—rather than media format. Some assets, such as websites, may pose particular challenges since they aggregate multiple intellectual categories. However, thinking at the outset towards potential “in-the-box” arrangement is helpful, especially since most collections containing such media are received as hybrids of traditional and digital materials. Finally, the distinction between materials created via traditional or digital methods is muted within on-line presentations organized by intellectual category: ultimately both rely upon a shared finding aid that acts as a gloss—or authoritative “text about the texts”—to mediate research understanding.

## SESSION 6

# Challenges of Digitizing Artists' Papers

Erin Kinhart, Archives of American Art

### Introduction

The Archives of American Art's large scale digitization initiative began in 2005 with a generous grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art. The six year grant project was a success and in June 2011 the Terra Foundation extended project funding through June 2016. The "Terra Project" has transformed the Archives of American Art (AAA).

Since the start of the project, over 118 collections have been digitized. Collections are primarily artists' papers, but also include gallery records and the papers of art historians and critics. They measure 1093 linear feet and consist of over 1.5 million digital images. The number of digital images can vary greatly in the collections, from 196 images for the Winslow Homer collection, nearly 26,000 images in the Hiram Powers papers, to over 330,000 images in the Jacques Seligmann and Co. records. The goal was to digitize standout collections, including the papers of Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, Jacob Lawrence, Louise Nevelson, and Joseph Cornell, and the records of the Armory Show, and Betty Parsons Gallery, just to name a few.

During this project, the staff has been able to establish a workflow that manages all of the work on a collection, from processing and finding aid creation to digitization. Staff has also created an online interface that allows users to experience digitized collections in a virtual reading room. The key to viewing digitized content is the online finding aid with a folder-level container inventory. From the online collection summary, the user can click on the tab "More about the collection" and view the finding aid written by the archivist. For digitized collections the folders listed in the container inventory are hyperlinks that take the user to a webpage with an interface to view the digitized items. Images are presented in a folder view, in the same context as if the researcher were using the original papers in the reading room. For an example of a digitized collection, please view the Louise Nevelson papers (<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/louise-nevelson-papers-9093>).

### Existing Archival Practices

The collection digitization project at AAA relies upon existing archival practices of arrangement and description. Project staff knew during planning that collections absolutely had to be fully processed and prepared with instructions before they could be digitized. Luckily, the Archives of American Art had been microfilming collections in-house for nearly fifty years, so guidelines had already been in place for imaging archival documents, and user feedback had revealed that collections that were poorly arranged and described were difficult to review on microfilm. Because of this, it made sense to re-purpose and enhance these existing processing and imaging workflows rather than invent new ones for this project.

Archivists at AAA were already writing finding aids that fol-

low encoded archival description standards. By linking images to the descriptive and contextual metadata that we were already putting into our finding aids, we didn't have to create new metadata to display with the images. It was already clear that item-level description for an entire digitized collection was not sustainable. We wanted to continue describing our holdings in aggregate, trying to reflect context, relationships, and hierarchy, as we do with all collections.

Here is a link to a folder of photographs of Jackson Pollock from the Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner papers: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/container/viewer/Portraits-of-Jackson-Pollock--286106>. As the user views the individual documents online, the minimal metadata provided includes the series name, folder title, and date range. This is pulled from what was written on the document folder, and is therefore the same description provided to the user reviewing the box of materials in the reading room.

### Project Workflow

As we developed a project workflow, we found that the archivists were the key to collection digitization. When one of the three project archivists is assigned to work on a collection, they process the collection, prepare it to be digitized, and also oversee the digitization and quality control review. They manage all actions on the collection from start to finish. I won't go into too much detail about workflow for this presentation, but initial tasks include processing the collection, preparing digitization instructions, and uploading the finding aid document to the database. When it is time to digitize the collection, the archivist then meets with the digitization technician to review instructions and checks in periodically on the progress and answers any questions about the material. Once the images are linked to the finding aid, she then reviews the images for quality control issues such as broken links, missing images, and other technical display glitches. The archivist then gives the final approval for display on AAA's public website.

All project staff members worked together to establish a progress checklist so that the archivist can check off when each task is completed. When the archivist finishes processing and writing a finding aid for a collection, she uploads that XML finding aid document into AAA's in-house collections database. The archivist can then access a progress checklist for that collection on AAA's intranet and check off when each task is completed.

### Challenge 1: Determining What Should NOT Be Digitized

So what challenges have the project archivists experienced in the last six years of this digitization project? Based on my experience processing and managing the digitization of many collections of artists' papers, I've identified four main challenges.

The first challenge is determining what should not be digitized. While we say that we digitize entire collections at AAA,

and we'd like to digitize everything if possible, there are almost always materials in artists' papers that should not be digitized. When processing collections, the archivists have to use their archival appraisal skills to determine materials that should not be digitized due to minimal research value, privacy issues, fragile condition, and copyright concerns. The Chief of Collections Processing at AAA created written guidelines for archivists on her staff to help identify these materials; however archivists sometimes just have to use their best judgment.

Types of materials not digitized from artists' papers include published materials easily found in a library, duplicates and large groups of photocopies, and documents such as tax records and medical records that contain personal information. More challenging are materials with questionable research value, such as reference files that the artist maintained on various subjects, or clipping files containing articles on topics that the artist found interesting. These materials don't directly document the artist's career and it is up to the archivist to determine if it is worth the time to digitize. We also occasionally have to consider private, sensitive material that may not be appropriate for an online environment such as pornographic documents or nude photographs, especially when depicting people other than the artist or artists' models. While many of the collections at AAA contain this type of material, we've only come across a few scattered items of this type in the collections selected for digitization.

All of the material we decide not to digitize is still described in the finding aid and made available in the reading room upon researcher request. To save time we try to determine to digitize or not to digitize at the folder or series level rather than item by item. For the material that should not be digitized, the archivist creates a paper tag with a note "Do not digitize this folder" and places it inside the folder so that when the digitization technician comes to that folder in the box he or she knows to skip it. In the online inventory, these folders will not include a hyperlink to images.

Even now that these guidelines are in place, making these determinations can still be a challenge, and occasionally there is enough researcher interest that we actually go back and digitize material that was not digitized initially, as long as there are no privacy concerns. For example, the Joseph Cornell papers were digitized in 2005. At that time his Source Material Files, which contained clippings from publications on various subjects such as animals, architectures, or ballet, were not digitized. These files were extensive and the archivist felt they didn't have a lot of research value. However, having the bulk of the papers digitized online piqued researcher interest in these unavailable files as well, and they were digitized and added to the finding aid in 2009.

### **Challenge 2: Digitizing Artwork and Special Format Items**

Artists' records frequently contain artworks on paper, includ-

ing pastel, pencil, and charcoal sketches, watercolor studies, and sketchbooks. Collections may also contain special format items such as scrapbooks, glass plate negatives, and photograph albums. Often these items are fragile and have preservation needs such as interleaving with acid-free paper or separate housing in conservation containers. Besides the challenge of preserving these items, they are also usually more difficult to digitize. When the archivist processes a collection, she has to write paper flags with special imaging or handling instructions for the digitization technician. The archivist also may need to meet with the technician in person to review this material and give handling instructions before the item can be digitized. It is usually easiest to interleave pages of a scrapbook or artwork and create other preservation housing after the items are digitized; otherwise the technician has to remove the interleaving as he or she digitizes the material, and make sure it gets placed back correctly.

Here is a link to view a digitized scrapbook created by the painter William H. Johnson in the 1920s: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/container/viewer/Scrapbook--219262>. The pages are made of very fragile brown paper onto which Johnson pasted letters he received, photographs, and newspapers clippings. It is hard to tell from the digitized pages, but the scrapbook as a whole is very large. The entire book was conserved several years ago with special interleaving and custom-made container. Though it was all nicely housed, digitizing the book meant that it had to be handled again by the technician, and I had to meet with her and show her how to remove the pages from the housing. Also, once the image was produced, we discovered that the user couldn't zoom in far enough to read the text or look at the detail in the photographs on each scrapbook page, so additional scans had to be made of these details.

Another example of a challenging item to digitize is a diary from the Oscar Bluemner papers (<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/container/viewer/Painting-Diary--173816>). While diaries are not typically considered a special format, Bluemner created "diaries" by compiling into brown envelopes loose drawings and notes written on scrap paper. He also created homemade notebooks out of scrap paper with the pages pasted together. Not only are these highly acidic documents fragile and difficult to handle, but it was critical that these items be digitized in the artists' original order, even if that order didn't appear to make sense to the viewer. Joseph Cornell's diaries are also are unconventional in form, consisting of entries, notes, and writings recorded on loose sheets and scraps of paper. It was critical that these items be digitized in the original arrangement intended by Cornell.

### **Challenge 3: Copyright Risk**

Another issue that we have to keep in mind as we digitize materials is copyright risk. Staff members are often asked by other archival repositories how we address this, especially for our more recent collections of artists' papers. Admittedly, over the

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last six years we have been willing to assume a very high threshold of risk tolerance: we avoid only the riskiest materials and do not seek permissions from copyright holders. We assume that almost everything falls under the broad concept of fair use.

One way we address copyright risk is to link to the Smithsonian's Terms of Use webpage (<http://www.si.edu/termsfuse/>), which outlines the Smithsonian's official policy on use, intellectual property rights, copyright, fair use, etc. It is fairly detailed and was written by the Smithsonian's Office of General Counsel and vetted by several attorneys. AAA has only had one complaint during the six years of posting both digitized collections and selected highlights from other collections. Rather than complain, most of the feedback has been very positive from our users, including individuals who discover their own documents or family documents online. It's clear that the benefits far outweigh any perceived risks.

An example of where we take copyright risks is with published materials such as newspaper and magazine clippings and scrapbooks containing these types of items. For example, we decided to digitize the autobiographical clippings files in the Ad Reinhardt papers. These clippings document Reinhardt's professional activities and published writings, and were compiled by him, so we feel that they have significant research value. For published materials such as exhibition catalogs, magazines, and other booklets, we often digitize only the cover, title page, and pages relevant to the artist. It's enough to let the researcher know that we have the item and that it is accessible in its entirety in our reading room.

Another copyright concern is photographs of works of art, which are often extensive in artists' papers. The actual artwork most likely has closely guarded copyright and reproduction rights, and licensing issues. It is AAA's current policy not to digitize un-annotated images of works of art. However, works of art are also fully or partially depicted in many of our photographs of artists, exhibitions, and galleries. We regularly receive photographs of artists with their paintings in the background. These may be donated by the artist or may have come to us via gallery records, and generally, we risk digitizing these items.

### Challenge 4: Time Management

As I mentioned earlier, artists' papers often arrive at AAA with very little established order and many preservation needs. The amount of processing work that we'd like to put into each of these collections means that our backlog of unprocessed material will continue to grow. Because of this, time management is a continuing challenge with this project. All collections that are digitized are fully processed first, meaning that the archivist arranges every item in every folder and addresses all preservation needs, with the idea that this is the final, ideal level of arrangement and description. Because pages are digitized individually, the archivist also removes all staples, paperclips, and fasteners as he or she works.

Because the archivist puts more work into the physical ar-

range of the collection, she is also able to provide more description of the materials. Most of the collections we have digitized are our prize collections that are used extensively by researchers, so we know that the additional description is helpful and appreciated. For example, all of the scrapbooks in the John White Alexander papers were fully digitized, and the archivist also provided detailed descriptive notes in the finding aid regarding significant items found in the books. This level of description for a digitized collection goes above and beyond the description for other collections. The amount of description varies, but, again, we want to provide the most complete information possible for these collections. It is up to the archivist to manage the time spent on this work.

All of this attention to detail, plus the time it takes to make digitization instructions, means that archivists can easily spend 20 to 40 hours on one linear foot box. For planning purposes, project staff maintains a yearly schedule of collections to be processed and digitized. With limited staff devoted to processing, this schedule is very helpful. Since 2005, we have been estimating 40 hours of processing per linear foot of material. For the first few years of the project we also used the average of 40 hours to digitize one linear foot of material. In the fall of 2010, AAA purchased a new digital camera and software and now the rate of digitization is much higher.

### Conclusion

Now that I've addressed the challenges we've come across with digitizing artists' papers, I will conclude by briefly discussing the thousands of collections that won't be digitized. At the Archives of American Art we categorize our current processing projects into two categories: those that will be fully processed and digitized, and those that will be minimally processed to provide access to researchers in our reading room. For the non-digitized collections, we're taking the more-product, less-process approach to catch up with our backlog and meet the needs of our new accessions. This includes providing an online finding aid with minimal description. We're also digitizing two or three select items as a collection is processed, which are displayed with the online collection record. Just recently we have also been researching and planning for an online "scan and deliver" system. A researcher will be able to read the online finding aid, click on a folder in the container listing, and submit a request to have that folder of material digitized. We're still discussing the best way to handle requests and display of these materials, but it will allow us to offer researchers digital content from a greater variety of artists' papers.

All of the technical documentation for processing and digitization at the Archives of American Art, including internal procedures and guidelines, are available online at <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/documentation>.

Artists’ Audiovisual Records

Megan McShea, Archives of American Art

Introduction

Over the last 50 years, the curators of the Archives of American Art have been collecting artists papers and other manuscript collections relating to art history. Within these collections, a sizeable number of film, sound, and video recordings have been steadily accruing. The exact quantity, format, condition, and content of these recordings were inconsistently and often inaccurately described, and were not tracked in any way. These records comprise what I refer to as the audiovisual (AV) backlog, and they are the subject of my remarks today. Overall, my goal as audiovisual archivist has been to build the capacity of our organization to handle access to and preservation of audiovisual records as effectively as it handles records on paper. I’d like to discuss in detail what we were up against in reaching this goal: and how we have gone about tackling the problem.

I will start with some background regarding the AV backlog: what it is, how it got there, where we stood with it when I began in my position in 2007. Then I’ll talk about what kind of AV records we have in our collections, and where they come from. Then I’ll go into some detail about steps we’ve taken to eliminate the AV backlog and prevent future backlogs and I’ll conclude with a few lessons learned.

The Collections

There is a huge variety of material among the AV records in our manuscript collections, and it crops up in all kinds of con-

texts. Some of the AV content that is unique to artists’ records is listed in Table 1 below. They include recordings of performances and happenings; film, video, or sound art; media objects that are components of artworks, documentation of installations, art openings, and media produced by curators as part of the interpretive layer of exhibitions. These are in addition to the standard interviews, home movies, panel discussions, lectures, documentaries, and other AV records common to most archives with 20th century collections. My personal favorite category of media creators in AAA’s collections is the artist-documentarian, a member of a creative community who was driven to document his or her scene, resulting in documentary recordings made by insiders with a high level of access to people who know and trust them. Depending on who made it and why, audiovisual recordings in each of these categories can be quite different in form, content, and quality.

Most of these recordings were produced using so-called consumer and educational media formats, rather than media formats used by professional media producers, and they were often made by people with no specialized knowledge of media production. Particularly for sound and video, this means the recording is often of a lower quality than we are used to with media made for broadcast or theatrical release, and it certainly won’t live up to today’s standards for home-made digital media. The quality limitations of the native, archival media

TYPES OF CONTENT		TYPES OF COLLECTIONS WHERE FOUND	
Interviews	Exhibition openings	Artists	Documentarians
Performances	Studies	Galleries	Journalists
Lectures, panels	Eulogies	Museums	Artist groups
Classes, crits	Homes and Studios	Art historians	Conservators
Radio and Television	Meetings	Curators	Legal records
Documentaries	Publicity	Collectors	Radio and TV producers
Home movies, other personal recordings	Workshops and Demonstrations	Educators and Schools	Artist organizations
Artwork	Source material for artwork	Art schools	

Table 1: Types of archival media at the Archives of American Art, and types of collections where it is found.

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format and the signal the recordist has captured can have consequences for those who want to access, re-use, and preserve it today. However, the technical quality of a recording is an entirely separate issue from its potential research value. It is important to understand something about the record’s creator and the purpose of the record’s creation in order to appraise the value of an audiovisual record in an archival context.

## The Problem

It’s easy to see how the AV backlog formed, at the Archives of American Art and in other manuscript repositories. Where there is no equipment to play the material, and no knowledge of the risks of playback to the material, or the lack of risks, audiovisual records don’t get played. When archivists can’t identify formats, and when there aren’t really good standards out there for archival description of media records, they don’t get described. Existing standards for archival media description are generally based on bibliographic descriptive standards that were written for published, broadcast, or otherwise distributed media works, so there’s little to turn to when describing most archival media, which are not works in that sense. Afraid of doing it wrong, then, archivists don’t do it at all, or they might try to retrofit bibliographic description into a finding aid. This creates a bottleneck in their own work with all that detail, and leaves more collections unprocessed. With so many obstacles to good processing, it’s easy to see why media-rich collections might get set aside from the processing queue. With the media not described, researchers may not discover it at all, or if they do, there’s no way to play it, so they have to pay for copies to be made, which they don’t.

Lacking the tools to process these records for research access the way we do other records, and maybe until recently lacking a heavy demand for them, we have ended up with a poorly understood and often hidden backlog of records that we’ve back-burnered indefinitely. By hidden backlog I mean that these recordings are just as likely to be in collections that are considered processed, but they remain both intellectually and physically inaccessible, and they’re not even on the repository’s radar as being part of the backlog.

## Solutions: Inventory, Description, Digitization

Lately the outlook has changed for archival audiovisual records. Some great tools and resources for handling archival media were cropping up when I started working on the Archives’ media records in 2007, and more are com-

ing all the time, it seems.<sup>1</sup> And on the research side, my sense – which could be biased – is that there is growing demand for the material, driven on the one hand by all the new potential uses for historical recordings in digital and exhibition environments, and on the other hand, by the ripening of the media-heavy contemporary period for art historical research. The emerging tools and best practices have made it possible to better identify, handle, and preserve our audiovisual records. And yet, even with all of these tools, I believe we are still lacking some important pieces when attempting an archival approach to archival records in audiovisual formats and I believe the AV backlog will continue to grow until it is addressed.

I don’t think I need to tell a roomful of archivists why it’s important to see records in terms of their provenance and context. However, with audiovisual records in particular there is a tendency to yank the recordings out of context and view them standing alone without the contextual relationship to their provenance and to other records. Without this context, they end up being valued differently, and perhaps even identified differently. Many do have value alone, but they also have specific meanings within the archival context. At AAA, we approach all of our collections like a traditional manuscript repository, at the collection level with finding aids as our fullest descriptive tool for our collections. Working on AV at AAA has therefore been an opportunity for me to think about applying traditional archival principles to audiovisual records.

These are the four areas I’ve been focused on at the Archives of American Art:

- 1. Inventory
- 2. Descriptive guidelines
- 3. Digitizing for Access
- 4. Digitizing for Preservation

I will describe each of these efforts briefly and discuss how they have contributed to our improved understanding and stewardship of the audiovisual records in our collections.

<p><b>Format and Preservation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Format, quantity, size, speed</li><li>• Quality of housing</li><li>• Obvious damage or deterioration</li></ul> <p><b>Content</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Genre of content</li><li>• Date of content</li><li>• Description of content</li></ul> <p><b>Provenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Type of creator</li><li>• Uniqueness</li></ul>	<p><b>Current physical and intellectual access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Location in collection</li><li>• Existence and location of related documentation</li><li>• Existence of access copies</li><li>• Accuracy of current catalog record for collection regarding the media</li><li>• Intellectual access rating</li><li>• Physical access rating</li></ul>
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Table 2: Data gathered in survey of AV records

## 1. Inventory

The first initiative was to try to quantify the problem with a collection-wide survey or inventory of audiovisual records in our manuscript collections. The survey's aim is to get an accurate count and identification of all audio, video, and motion picture film recordings, resulting in data that will enable collection management and prioritization. When I survey a collection, first I find all the media.

Then, I sort it into intellectual groups or series, not into physical formats – that's key, because I want to collect data not just about the physical thing, but also about its content and context. It is more efficient to do that in series of related items. Also, media objects on different formats can be the same thing or part of the same series, and you lose those relationships when you sort by format and collect data that way. I wanted to preserve those relationships among the media objects in the way I collected data about them. So, for each series or group of audiovisual material in a collection, I collect information about format, and preservation issues, content, provenance, and the current state of physical and intellectual access. I also collect data as updates are made, when housing is replaced, when items are digitized, when a collection is processed, and when items are preserved.

Now, after a few years of plugging away at this mostly on my own, I have finished the inventory for collections we had already, and I have started to survey new accessions. I am now notified of all new accessions. If they have audiovisual media in them, I add them to the inventory, preventing future audiovisual records backlog, I hope.

So far, I've counted 13,527 objects in 754 collections, of which about 65% are definitely unique records not found elsewhere, and an additional 18% could be unique. The inventory has enabled us to quantify that for the first time—and many other things, as well.

I will walk you through a few facets of this data. Below is a visualization of survey data on format, showing formats sorted by category sized in proportion to their quantities. The largest group is analog audio, followed by analog video, film, digital audio, digital video, and other digital formats. You can see very easily here what our most prevalent formats are.

In 2007, before any of this work was done, the reference staff was only able to serve audio cassette tapes and VHS video from collections, which meant there was access to about half of the audiovisual materials in our collections – and only 2 of about 40 formats we have. For any other type of analog media, if someone wanted to see or hear something, the answer had to be no. Of course, we didn't have those numbers then, either. Now, we have a process for producing digital access copies in-house for five formats, which raises that percentage access to 80%. We also have procedures in place to protect media from being damaged during playback. If you add in a donated 16mm Steenbeck, we are up to 92% research access to media in our collections. It's nice to be able to quantify the impact of changes made to our procedures this way, which we couldn't do without the inventory.

On the next page is a pie chart from survey data of the types of content. You can see that interviews are the most prevalent in light blue, then lectures and panel discussions in orange,

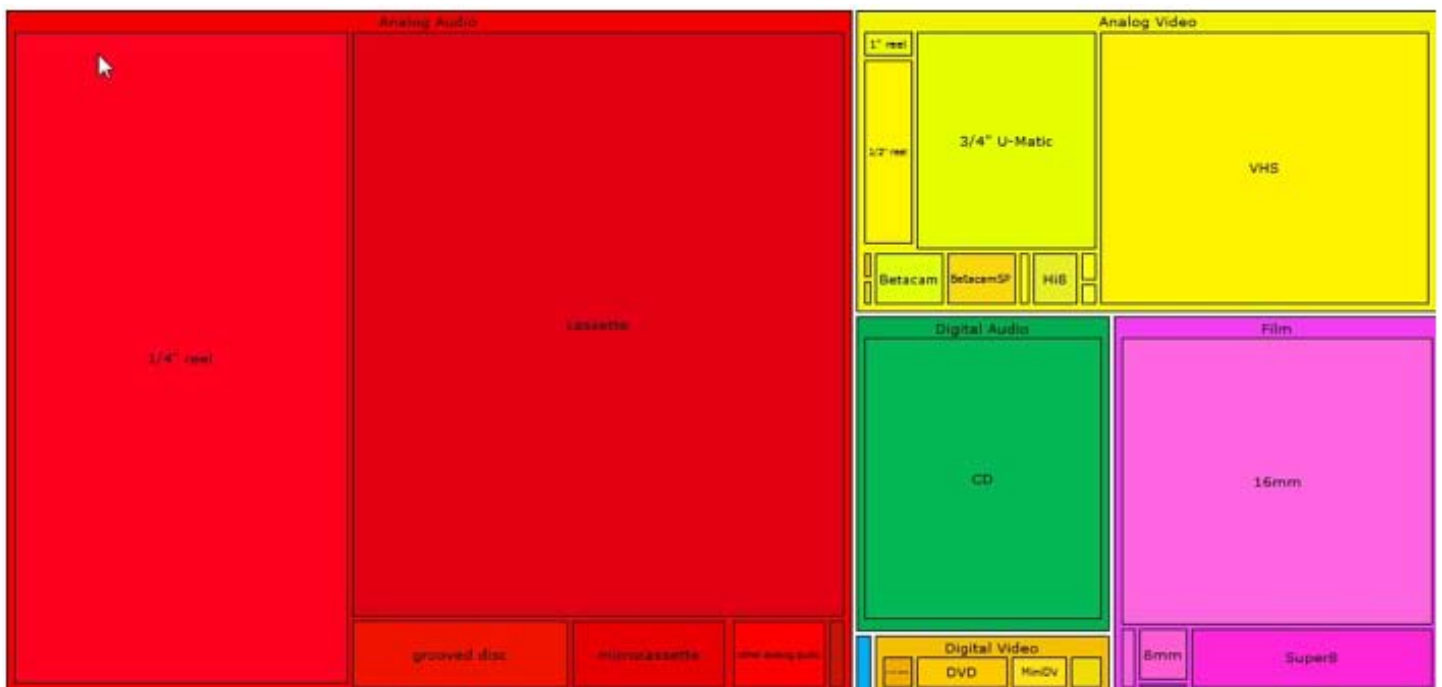


Figure 1: Quantities of media formats at the Archives of American Art, shown in proportion to one another. Visualization created applying a gadget to a spreadsheet of media quantities in Google Docs.

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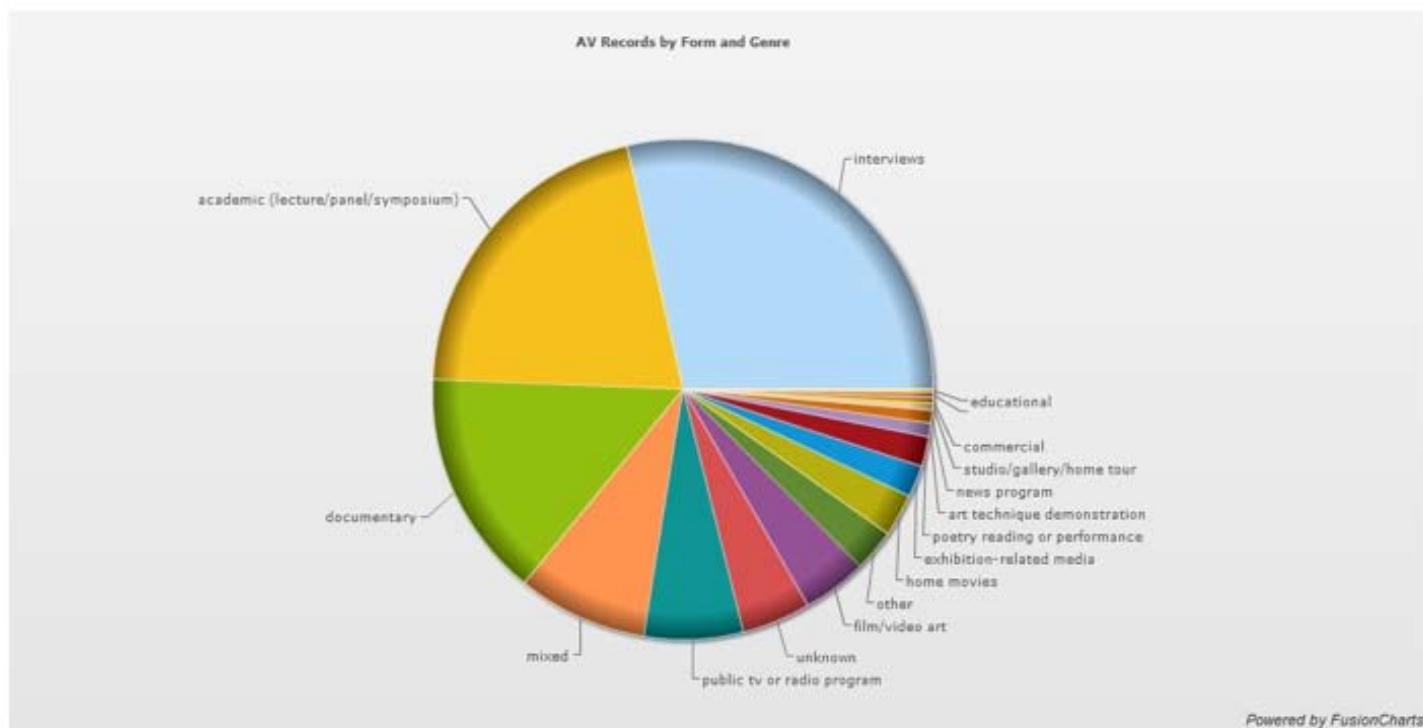


Figure 2: Types of content found among AV records at the Archives of American Art.

then edited documentaries in green, and so on. Most troubling to me here is the number of media whose content is unknown, nearly 600, that pale red slice.

### 2. Description

In addition to the inventory, we've implemented some basic descriptive guidelines for creating accurate and consistent description in our EAD finding aids and item records. For all of our collections, we create finding aids when collections are processed, and we create item records when an audiovisual item is digitized. Often, because collections get processed before items are digitized or accessed, the media records are first described in finding aids. However, DACS and EAD documentation do little to guide us in how specifically to describe audiovisual records in collections. So at AAA we created guidelines based on DACS that would work with our existing programming to make explicit what metadata to include in finding aids at the collection, series, and item or folder level, and how specifically to encode it in EAD.

I should note that RBMS, ARSC and AMIA have committees working on companion standards to DACS for archival media, which will be extremely useful and helpful. However, all of those initiatives are for item-level cataloging, so archivists will continue to be on their own for an archival approach to describing audiovisual media in their finding aids.

### 3. Digitization for Access

To increase research access to our materials, as I mentioned, we built a digitization workstation to digitize our most prevalent audiovisual formats: VHS and U-matic video, sound cassettes,

and ¼" audio reels. When a request is made by a researcher, I inspect the media before playback to ensure it is in good enough condition to be played. If it is, the item can be digitized by me or another staff member. I wrote a manual for our digitization workstation with detailed instructions for using the equipment and the capture software, how to name files and where to store them, so that whoever uses this equipment gets a consistent copy at consistent specifications, and recordings and files are documented in a consistent way. We can burn CDs or DVDs if needed, but the main copy is a file stored on the network that can be accessed by anyone in the organization, which is linked to our item-level description of the media. The entire project cost us \$16,000 for equipment and installation, and a non-trivial amount of staff programming time to enable the network storage and description. Costs were not trivial, but they were not exorbitant either. The payoff is that we rarely have to say no when a researcher is interested in accessing media in our collections. We can make this assurance to potential donors as well: that if they give us their media records, we will provide access to them.

### 4. Digitization for Preservation

We don't have any dedicated funding for preservation, but we have been doing digital preservation of deteriorated, at-risk, and inaccessible media, raising money little by little. We do not have engineers on staff or proper equipment to do this level and volume of work in-house, so we outsource the preservation. All the descriptive metadata is created in-house. In general, I have selected records for preservation purely by format, not by

content. I began by focusing on formats that were at high risk and that we could not play ourselves – acetate discs, video reels, damaged or very fragile audio tape. To date, we have preserved around 700 media items through outsourcing.

Digital preservation has been great for access. We can now play recordings that we couldn't play before. We've made discoveries of things we did not know we had. On the downside, when you have unlabeled materials on media you can't play, you have to pay to get it preserved before you know what it is. This can seem pretty hard to justify, but I think it is better to have access and to know once and for all what a recording is, thus removing it from the hidden backlog. When I encounter these unknowns in our collections, I group them with other items recorded on the same format, and argue for their preservation based on the general risk of loss to our collections due to that format's inherent fragility and obsolescence. I send unlabeled media to a qualified lab so we know what they are. We have found duplicates and blank tapes this way, but we have also found significant recordings that we did not know we had. To me, having basic intellectual access to content is a fundamental priority of processing. Simply saying a tape exists may be the best we can do sometimes, but in truth this is only flagging the backlog, not processing.

Another problem is that we began this work without any pan-institutional solution for digital preservation storage. It's in the works, but for now our relatively small unit is managing preservation masters and metadata in-house, and it's a lot to handle. A lot of files, and big files, a lot of metadata, and we're still building the means to ingest it all properly three years later. Still, the consensus in my organization was not to wait. Get the content migrated, back it up, and we'll figure it out. The benefit to moving forward outweighs the risk of not moving forward. In the meantime, we've climbed a steep learning curve by getting experience with digital preservation. We are now much better-positioned make decisions about infrastructure for long-term digital preservation.

## V. General Principles, Lessons Learned

I will conclude with a few specific principles that address common misconceptions around archival and digital audiovisual media. Many of these are false assumptions made about media, and about digitization.

### 1. Get the Original

With audiovisual materials, because they are reproducible, there's often confusion about what is original and what should be preserved. The donor is often not the best judge of what the proper copy for the archives to acquire is, and curators may question the value of a recording in an obsolete format that we can't play. I recently heard a talk by a museum conservator who showed us a video she had received from an artist whose work was being acquired by the museum. Even though the tape had the word "master" on it and it came from the artist

via a reputable lab, on viewing it, the conservator knew it was a poor copy, and she worked with the artist to get a good copy accessioned for the museum's collections.

Museums are different from archives. One important difference in this context is that items within archival collections may not receive attention for some time, depending on staffing and institutional priorities. Media records in particular may not be examined closely when a collection is brought in. This is all the more reason to be sure you've got the primary source and not a copy, since backtracking to source material that was never acquired will be difficult if not impossible later, if a problem is discovered with the copy.

As the preserving repository, you should be the keeper of the primary source. If a donor wants to give you only copies, you're at a real disadvantage when you go to preserve the recording, in more ways than one. You won't know what might be missing from the copy, or how the process of making it may have degraded its content. You might lose important information on the label or box of the original, which could be keyed to related records. Take the copies if they are more convenient for access, but get the originals, too, even if you don't have a way to play them. And if the donor isn't ready to give up the originals, wait until he or she is ready, but make it clear you want them.

When confronted with multiple versions and components of a large media project, as a general rule of thumb, the most important versions are usually a) the object that was originally recorded by the creator of the recording (i.e. the raw footage or camera roll) and b) a so-called 'finished' product or products made from that raw footage by the creator, in the highest quality in which it exists. The highest quality will usually be the copy of the edited work that is closest in generation to the raw recordings. When in doubt, take everything that is available. Duplicate material can be weeded later.

### 2. Digitization Is Not Necessarily Preservation

Digitization does not necessarily mean preservation, and this is something that is chronically misunderstood by non-archivists and archivists unfamiliar with media. A DVD is a highly-compressed access format. It is not a preservation format. It is by no means the best copy, and it will not last long-term on optical media. A digital copy of a born-analog recording is usually worse quality than the original, but people often think there's some inherent improvement to the quality or the durability of the content by making it digital. It's not true. The only improvement is short-term access.

### 3. Don't Assume It's Not Unique

Don't assume that because it's a reproducible object that it exists somewhere else. Even if it was made by a third party, don't assume that it's been preserved or kept by its creator. And don't necessarily decline to preserve it because you don't have the copyright. Sure, some things were obviously widely distributed or are under the care of a studio, a distributor, a library, or

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another repository, but don't assume they are. The low-budget and independently made work is especially fugitive, and so is public broadcast and public access material. You don't have rights, but you may well have the only copy that has survived, so it's better to assume it's the only copy until proven otherwise.

### 4. Not All Digital Is Created Equal

Born-digital formats may be much more fragile or at-risk than some of the older analog formats. This is the same for audiovisual digital media as it is for any other born-digital thing. And this is particularly true for digital content on magnetic tape and optical disc carriers, or any consumer formats, which are the most common class of media we tend to get. These formats were designed for production and access, and they're lousy for preservation.

### 5. Poorly Made Recordings Can Still Have Research Value

Just because an artist is brilliant doesn't mean he or she had great technical skills with media. But don't assume poorly made recordings have no value, either. The research value of an audiovisual record in the archives is an entirely different assess-

ment than the aesthetic value of an artwork, or the production values of professionally made media. Don't judge archival media by different standards than other records in the archives because it's media. It doesn't have a higher bar.

### 6. Traditional Archival Principles Apply

Part of the failing for audiovisual records in manuscript repositories has been that we think they should be treated differently from other records. However, many of the problems that have emerged can be solved by treating them the same and applying traditional archival principles. Collect primary sources, not copies; preserve intellectual relationships among records in the arrangement and describe intellectual content (i.e., don't arrange and describe formats); and, finally, create description according to standards: when the standards don't do what you want them to, create local guidelines that do. The object of archival processing is to enable physical and intellectual access to records in archival collections, not to list objects. Until you can tell researchers what the content of AV records are, and how they can see and hear them, they will remain part of the backlog.

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<sup>1</sup> These are just a few of the many excellent tools and guides for managing archival audiovisual media available via the Internet. Included are inventory tools, best practices documentation, manuals, and format identification guides, all accessed December 27, 2011.

1. Columbia University's Audio/Moving Image Survey Database: <https://library.columbia.edu/bts/preservation/projects.html>,
2. Illinois University at Urbana-Champaign's Audio-Visual Self-Assessment Program: <http://www.library.illinois.edu/prescons/projgrants/grants/avsap/index.html>,
3. Indiana University's Field Audio Collection Evaluation Tool (FACET): <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/projects/sounddirections/facet/index.shtml>; includes the Format Characteristics and Preservation Problems document, an excellent visual aid for the identification of sound formats and their common preservation problems.
4. "Sound directions: best practices for audio preservation," Indiana University: <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/projects/sounddirections/papersPresent/index.shtml>,
5. Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative, Audio-Visual working group: <http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/audio-visual/>,
6. Texas Commission on the Arts, Videotape Identification and Assessment Guide: <http://www.arts.state.tx.us/video/>
7. Video Preservation Website, Video Format Identification Guide: [http://videopreservation.conservaion-us.org/vid\\_id/index.html](http://videopreservation.conservaion-us.org/vid_id/index.html),
8. The National Film Preservation Foundation's Film Preservation Guide: <http://www.filmpreservation.org/preservation-basics/the-film-preservation-guide>,
9. New York University's Visual Inspection and Playback Ratings System for magnetic media: <http://library.nyu.edu/preservation/movingimage/vipirshome.html>,
10. Video Aids to Film Preservation: <http://www.folkstreams.net/vafp/>.

# Managing Artists' Legacies: Stewardship of Artists' Records

## Introduction

Gretchen Opie, Dedalus Foundation

The three papers presented in this panel explore different approaches to an issue that affects all curators of artists' archives: the role an artist's records can have in shaping the artist's legacy.

Each of the authors discusses a different collection that presents unique issues—from the importance of maintaining students' artwork and records in their original academic context at RISD; to the way the Judy Chicago Art Education collection was designed to “live” and evolve through the diverse ways in which users engage with the materials; to the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation's efforts to ensure that the artist's impermanent installations will continue to exist, by creating a cross-referenced catalog of past installations and source materials that can act as a guide for future curators.

The papers address practical concerns related to acquiring, processing, and maintaining artists' records. They explore more theoretical issues as well, such as the various collaborations that can take place—between artist and archive, between departments within an institution, and especially between a collection and its users. Since artists' records are so connected to their art, and archival materials can change the interpretation of the work, balancing users' needs with the artists' intentions becomes a critical part of managing artists' legacies.

## There Are No Art Stars: Student Work in Context in the RISD Archives

Andrew Martinez, Archivist, Rhode Island School of Design

Although many Rhode Island School of Design graduates have moved on to critical and commercial success and have received distinguished awards including Guggenheim Fellowships and MacArthur Foundation prizes, the “unstated” practice among the RISD faculty is to not favor any one graduate of their particular programs over any others. It has been said that “there are no art stars at RISD”—not among its current faculty and students nor among its alumni.

Mind you, this is a school that in the last 50 years has included faculty and students such as Caldecott Medal winners David Macaulay, Brian Selznik, and Chris Van Allsburg; filmmakers Ryan Trecartin and Gus Van Sant; animator Seth MacFarlane; actor/comedian and painter Martin Mull; numerous musicians including three members of Talking Heads; apparel designer Nicole Miller; illustrators Roz Chast and Shepard Fairey; photographers Harry Callahan, Linda Connor, James Dow, Emmet Gowen, Aaron Siskind, and Francesca Woodman; glass artists Dale Chihuly and Jamie Carpenter; sculptors Janine Antoni, Roni Horn, and Andrea Zittel; visual artists Jenny Holzer, Julie Mehretu, Shazia Sikander, and Kara Walker; and graphic designer Tobias Frere-Jones. I guess that I neglected to mention Renaissance man James Franco.

But before I talk about the work of RISD students, I should tell you more about RISD and the RISD Archives.

The RISD Archives was established in 1997 to identify, collect, preserve, and make available records and artifacts that document the history and development of RISD—the school and

museum—and the role that the institution and individuals associated with it have played in advancing the disciplines of art, design and art education—regionally, nationally and worldwide since 1877. To that end, the Archives houses a unique, RISD-specific collection of architectural plans, artifacts, documents, ephemera, films, photographs, publications, videotapes, and works of art.

The RISD Archives is a department of the school library, which falls under the jurisdiction of Academic Affairs headed by the Provost. Although the library and archives serve the entire institution—approximately 25-30% of the archives collections are comprised of historic museum records—sometimes it can be problematic to be organizationally linked with one branch of RISD and not the other. However, when it comes to collecting and administering art for the archives, this arrangement offers some advantages.

RISD began in 1877 with the dual mission of having a school for instruction in art and design coupled with an art collection for the benefit of the students and the education of the general public. Until 1893, when RISD moved out of rented quarters into its own newly constructed building, there was no museum per se. The public was welcome to visit the school and see its study collections as well as attend customary exhibitions of student work, but the school and museum functions of the institution took place within its four rented rooms.

The new building in 1893 marks the beginning of a true RISD museum, with its own entrance and separate galleries.

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From then on, the school and museum would grow their own identities and, accordingly, their own art collections for their own specific purposes. The dual nature of the institution was formalized in 1929 when the Trustees did away with a Director of RISD, splitting the position in two with a Director of the School and a Director of the Museum.

The RISD Museum, which houses the third largest university art collection in the United States after Harvard and Yale, has its own policies and criteria for acquiring and maintaining works of art and design. So does the School. The policies regarding the collection of student work go back to RISD's first academic year in 1878. The first policy stated that "All drawings made as part of the work of the school will be retained by the School Management until after the annual exhibition." Eventually this policy stopped appearing in publications and was absent for several decades.

When a policy makes its reappearance in print in the mid-twentieth century, it includes a provision for the long-term, even permanent, retention of student work. The 1962-1963 course catalog states that:

The College reserves the right to hold examples of student work both for temporary and permanent exhibitions. The College will exercise due care in the custody of such work, but assumes no responsibility for its loss or damage. It is also understood that pictures of students or of students' work may be used for whatever purpose the college deems necessary.

The following year, the policy was shortened to read: "All academic work undertaken by students is regarded as an exercise in education, not as the production of exhibitable, saleable art. The college reserves the right to use photographs of students and student work for its educational purposes." In 1977-1978 we have: "The College reserves the right to retain examples of student work for exhibition or for its permanent collection, and the right to use photographs of students and their student work."

Rather recently—within the last ten years—RISD hired its first administrative legal counsel. The General Counsel, Steven McDonald, happens to be a specialist in intellectual property issues and one of his first tasks was to create an Intellectual Property Rights Policy for the institution. Unlike the brief statements that I just read, the Intellectual Property Rights Policy is three pages long. It includes a section on College Use Rights, which gives RISD:

the right to make photographic or similar representation reproductions of faculty and student Works located at or made available to the College, and to distribute, display, perform, and otherwise use those reproductions, for the noncommercial purposes of education and scholarship, exhibition, accreditation, development, alumni relations, promotion, and the like; as examples of faculty

and student work; and for inclusion in its permanent collection and/or archives.

Before the RISD Archives was established, "permanent collection" basically meant the "archives" or collections maintained by each separate academic department. These departmental archives were and continue to be documentation of the work of students that can be used for teaching purposes and as examples to share with visiting committees and, in the case of the architectural disciplines, accreditation teams that periodically review the work of the departments. Given the nature of the mediums that students work in—painting, sculpture, industrial design, architecture, apparel, ceramics, glass—it would be impractical if not impossible for most departments to gather and store actual examples of student works that are three-dimensional or large-scale objects. In those instances, reproductions such as 35mm slides and, more recently, digital images have had to suffice. In effect, the departmental archives is a departmental slide library or repository of images.

With photography, film, and video—media that have traditionally lent themselves to the production of multiple copies in which the original and copy can oftentimes be indistinguishable—the corresponding departments (Photography and Film, Animation, Video) have been able to collect actual works of art. At RISD the Photography department has been collecting graduate and undergraduate prints, slides, and videos since the mid-1960s. The Film, Animation, Video department has been assembling their collection of undergraduate films and videos since the early 1970s.

With the advent of institutional archives in 1997, these two departments were eager to free up the physical space required to house these archives. They were also pleased to give up the function of being the guardian for these materials, which meant lending out keys and managing requests. Now, these student works of art reside in the RISD Archives, along with other documentation of the academic departments, their curriculum, faculty, and alumni. The questions I would like to consider here, and ones I frequently ask myself as I go about maintaining the archives are: (1) Is there an archival context for this student work—a provenance and original order—and if so how does this context affect the way that one views and interprets the work of students? And (2), how does the archival placement of the work of what the world external to RISD considers "art stars" differ from similar work being included in a curated museum collection, even the collections of the RISD Museum?

I would argue that there is an archival context for these works that would be lost if we were to remove the work of noteworthy students and transfer them to the Museum's collection. With the Photography degree projects, we have student statements of purpose as well as documentation of how the students installed their work in their senior exhibition. We also have a multitude of prints or images in each student's portfolio, a body of work

that constitutes a larger whole. The work was created by the student working with his or her faculty within the context of “student work” and “degree requirements.” That state of “educational purposes” continues and is preserved when housed in the archives. In this archival context, a curator has not entered the equation to edit the work or change the context.

In the Archives, rather than looking at each student’s work as isolated aesthetic objects unto themselves, we can also account for the academic work of one’s contemporaries, (i.e., classmates), as well as any available information on the academic programs, the faculty at that time and their particular teaching methods, class assignments, visiting lecturers and critics, and so on. This information can be found among the records of the academic departments, as well as other related and seemingly unrelated record groups in the archives. Unlike any art museum collection that I know of, the student work of some of the art and design world’s recognized “stars” truly resides in an “original order” alongside the work of their relatively “anonymous” classmates in the archives.

If we follow the logic that student work is made for educational purposes and not to be “saleable,” one could argue that the student work was created not with a museum or collector in mind, but as one more graduation requirement. No one at RISD is betting or banking on future art stars when the work is collected and kept. Aesthetics or fine art concerns do not factor into the collecting criteria. The reason we keep the work has everything to do with their role as records and teaching materials.

I would now like to consider the work of RISD alumna Francesca Woodman. Tragically, she committed suicide within two years of her graduation from RISD. Her fame has come posthumously, and for the most part is based on the work she made while a student. There have been numerous monographs published on Francesca and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is putting together a retrospective exhibition that will be at the Guggenheim Museum in 2012. Oftentimes her work is viewed and admired with little acknowledgement of its original, academic attributes. Within the context of the archives, it is not so easy to overlook the educational functions of the work.

The RISD Archives has Woodman’s degree project in its collections. The project consists of twenty-one 4 inches by 5 inches black & white Kodalith transparencies attached with cellophane tape to white tissue paper that measures 29.5 inches high by 20 inches wide. Francesca had written notes regarding the images on the tissue paper to communicate her intentions to her faculty advisor, Wendy MacNeil:

Dear Wendy –

As you can see this is finishing school with a wimper [sic] and late besides... I kept hoping that time would be found to at least print them better. Then I kept

thinking i’d call you and get an extension so I could print them and reshoot them but I’m beginning to understand that I can’t have my conciou conscience bother me about school when I have to get on with so many other things.

awful

However these mediocre prints made on flat perculiar [sic] European Kodalith from often fogged strangely focused negatives of not very interesting subjects are sort of interesting to me. I think that it was a real strange point for me. When I was in Europe I kept trying to not to think so I wouldn’t worry about the future – moving to N.Y. – looking for work etc. so they are limbo pictures.

This is my favorite room anywhere I’m going to live there some time it’s a hotel w/6 rooms – it’s 6.00 a night

These are very dark. Hold them up to light.

My first fashion pictures are also terrible but I’m starting some good things there – I’ll send you them they will be really [ready?] for Wendy not like this stuff.

The work was mailed in a grey envelope (9 inches high by 12 inches wide). A black and white photograph (4 inches high by 7 inches wide) as well as collaged bits of appropriated correspondence are attached to the envelope with masking tape.

One can make the case that all of these elements that make up the degree project constitute an entire work of art. To remove any one of these components for exhibition or to make a posthumous print of any one image would disturb the original context represented by the many pieces.

In addition to the degree project, the RISD Archives has access to Francesca Woodman’s transcript—allowable under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act—descriptions of the courses she took and information on the faculty who taught her, details about the European Honors Program in Rome where Francesca spent her junior year, and documentation of her senior exhibition. We are also able to view Woodman’s work in relation to the work of her RISD Photography contemporaries.

In the case of students/alumni such as Jenny Holzer, Shazia Sikander, and Kara Walker, the RISD Archives has no visual examples—actual work or photographic reproductions—of their student work. However, the Archives does have a great deal of contextual information regarding their course of study and projects, as well as their post-RISD careers. The Archives has original written statements from all three of these artists that they submitted to their faculty, describing how they envision their own work and what they hope to learn as they move through their RISD programs. These statements offer important insight into their art, and show the germination of

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ideas and themes found in the work they have produced since leaving RISD.

Francesca Woodman and her degree project represent just one example of a work of art in the archival context. I asked one of the RISD Museum curators who has studied student work in the Archives if she views the work any differently than the work in her collection. She answered “No. It is just more work to be looked at along with all the other work by these artists.”

When I asked the same question to a faculty member, a graduate of the Photography department who brings her classes and directs students to the RISD Archives to view the degree projects, she provided the following comments:

The work in the Archives gives students access to the process. Coupled with the artist’s statement, one has a good idea of the whole project in its entirety. It is a privilege to see the work in this way. When one sees the work of Francesca Woodman in the Archives, one senses an honesty and accessibility that isn’t necessarily there in a curated museum setting.

When an artist’s work has been curated, edited and selected, it oftentimes comes across as too polished and in the process the artist’s original vision can come out changed. In the edited state, the work can be lacking in some important information for the students. In viewing a degree project documenting a previous student’s process, current students are able to see what works and doesn’t work, what went into the process.

In looking at students who have gone on to greater notoriety and a greater body of known work, it is interesting to compare their student work to what came after. Students are able to talk about what has stayed the same with the work and what may have changed.

For the students, the archival work is more accessible. It helps them to imagine what they can do. It gives them confidence to see that their work doesn’t have to be under glass. Seeing the work is not intimidating, but inspiring. Looking at the work in the Archives, it’s good to hate it, good for the students to figure out what they like and don’t like. It’s fodder for their own process. Students grow more quickly with more access to more work.

As with any artist, it’s not always possible to look at their early work and tune out any existing knowledge one may have of the work that follows. However, I feel that that the archival context, provided by placing the student work in the RISD Archives, ties the art to an original place and time, creating an original context that informs the viewing of the work.

# Archiving a Living Curriculum: Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower*, and *The Dinner Party*

Jackie Esposito, Penn State University Archivist & Ann Holt, PhD candidate in Art Education

This paper describes the recent gift, by artist Judy Chicago, to the Penn State University Archives. On September 6, 2011, The Judy Chicago Art Education Collection opened to the public at Penn State University Libraries on the University Park campus, as well as online (<http://judychicago.arted.psu.edu/>). This was and will continue to be a collaborative effort between the Art Education Department at Penn State University and the Penn State University Archives. Jackie Esposito, Penn State University Archivist, coordinated the acquisition of Judy Chicago's papers; Ann Holt, PhD candidate in Art Education and graduate assistant in the Penn State University Libraries, processed the papers.

Judy Chicago's teaching collection is now part of an already extensive and growing number of art education collections at Penn State University. Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd, professor of art education and affiliate professor of Women's Studies at Penn State, was instrumental in Chicago's interest in Penn State and in bringing the collection to the University Archives. The art education collections as a whole consist mainly of former Penn State art education faculty papers, but also include research collections connected to other prominent art educators. In addition, Penn State holds the National Art Education Association records as well as the Pennsylvania Art Education Association records. Currently, there are about twenty-five art education collections and they continue to increase, making Penn State the center for records documenting the field of art education in the United States and internationally. For more information regarding the art education collections see: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/researchguides/artsspecial.html>

Feminist artist and art educator Judy Chicago was born in Chicago, Illinois, as Judy Cohen in 1939. Through her art and teaching practice, she helped raise feminist consciousness and has since become an icon in the art world. In 1974, Chicago began researching women's history to create *The Dinner Party*, which was executed between 1974 and 1979 with the aid of numerous skilled hands. Today, it is on permanent display at the Brooklyn Art Museum, Elizabeth Sackler Museum for Feminist Art.

In much the same way Judy sought to insert women into history, as an art educator, she also wanted to create a space for women and women's identity in pedagogy within the learning environment. Although Judy Chicago's teaching collection is

the focus of this paper, it is worth noting a statement she made about *The Dinner Party* in 1981, concerning the erasure of women's achievements in history. It reflects the importance of preserving, archiving, and sustaining access to historical records for future understanding. By saving her art education records at Penn State, Chicago has created a space for marking and remembering feminist perspectives in art education history. She said:

One thing I learned from my studies of history was that even though women achieved, those achievements would be erased, the next decade, the next generation. I wanted to challenge that process, to end that process, to honor those achievements, and to introduce them into the society, through a work of art that would symbolize our heritage, so that those achievements could never be erased from history again.<sup>1</sup>

With attention to process, collaboration, and a feminist analytical viewpoint, Chicago pioneered a feminist approach to art and art education. Starting at California State University, in the early 1970s, she brought this approach to her female students. Chicago coined the term "feminist art pedagogy" at this time with a pedagogical approach centering on content connected to individual perspectives, ideas, and experience. Feminist art pedagogy is intended to help students gradually develop a consciousness about gender along with a deep understanding of women's history, women's art, and women's achievements.<sup>2</sup> Recalling her intentions when she first started teaching in the 1970s, she states:

What I wanted to do was encourage my students to do what I was going to then try to do in my own work, which was peel away the formal prohibitions to my own content. But of course they didn't have them yet because they hadn't professionalized like I had. So they didn't have the same level of prohibition against their own content. As soon as I gave them permission and a context, it was like taking a lid off a boiling pot.<sup>3</sup>

The Judy Chicago Art Education Collection is a unique and important collection of archival materials on feminist art teaching because it continues to do something radically different by inserting feminist perspectives in art pedagogy. Feminist art

<sup>1</sup> See: Tyson, T. (Producer) & Demetrakas, J. (Director) (1980). *Right out of History: The Making of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party* [DVD]. United States: The Phoenix Learning Group, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Keifer-Boyd, K. (2003). "A Pedagogy to Expose and Critique Gendered Cultural Stereotypes Embedded in Art Interpretations." *Studies in Art Education*, 48(2): 134-154.

<sup>3</sup> Judy Chicago interview, October 25th, 2010, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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pedagogy becomes part of art education practice, part of the history of the field, and part of a scholarly heritage of the field. Moreover, as the first feminist art education collection to be acquired by Penn State University Archives, it has much to offer feminist scholars in art education, art, and women's studies through opportunities to work with primary source materials from an artist prominent in the feminist art movement. Her collection will continue to inspire new work around the subject of feminist art pedagogy.

Judy Chicago's pedagogical method provides a model for teaching that is content-centered, idea-driven, and deeply meaningful. This does not by any means reduce the importance of technical ability and skill in making art. Rather, it lets inquiry drive the medium, which becomes a skill to be learned and mastered. In 1999, Chicago returned to teaching with her husband, photographer Donald Woodman, and developed a pedagogical strategy called participatory art pedagogy.<sup>4</sup> The term "participatory" is used to describe a teaching methodology, rooted in feminist practices, that provides space for participants to speak within a community in which different views can be expressed and argued without retaliation from the group. Karen Keifer-Boyd published an article describing this approach and also created a website to be used as a tool for other feminist art educators.<sup>5</sup>

Chicago and Woodman have engaged in many collaborations, teaching projects, seminars, and residencies, which became the basis for processing and arranging the whole collection. The collection is organized in the following series: *At Home: A Kentucky Project*, Commencement, *The Dinner Party Curriculum*, Duke University, *Envisioning the Future*, Fresno Feminist Art Program, General Files, Indiana University, Individual Artworks, New York Feminist Art Institute, Through the Flower, Vanderbilt University, and *Womanhouse*. The collection consists of textual, photographic, graphic, and audio-visual materials related to Judy Chicago's art and pedagogy, including *Womanhouse*. *The Dinner Party Curriculum* materials document the development of the project's workshop and website and include color photographs, manuscripts drafts, correspondence, and a plate and runner for instructional purposes (1997-2011). *Envisioning the Future* materials include slides of the exhibit installations, performance, and lectures, along with correspondence and class materials (1999-2008). Materials from *At Home: A Kentucky Project* include framed artwork, textual records, slides, scanned images, and a large scale model used for instruction (2001-2008). Also included are textual and audio-visual materials from courses taught at Vanderbilt University, Indiana University, and Duke University (1994- 2007), and videotapes and slides documenting the Fresno Feminist Art Program (1970-1971) and the New York Feminist Art Institute.

### Legal Framework: The Art of Crafting a Deed of Gift for an Artist's collection

All donated archival/manuscript collections require a Deed of Gift to specifically delineate the processes, procedures, expectations, rights, and responsibilities inviolate in the relationship between the Donor and the Archives. In the case of the Judy Chicago papers, the Deed was complicated by the number of constituent groups involved in the donation as well as the number of types of donations being made by Chicago. The Deed of Gift signed by Chicago in spring 2011 contained seven (7) separate agreements. Each agreement addressed a specific segment of the donation and the collection. In addition the Deed included a detailed definition of the concept of a living curriculum which was then embedded in the various agreements. Each agreement is discussed in detail below.

Agreement #1 – Through the Flower Foundation: The influential non-profit feminist art organization founded in part by Chicago (hereinafter referred to as the Foundation) owned the rights to *The Dinner Party Curriculum Project*. As such the Foundation transferred all previously held ownership rights to The Pennsylvania State University (hereinafter referred to as Penn State). The Foundation also transferred the actual Through the Flower website. This part of the agreement required Penn State to establish a date and time to transfer the website as well as protocols, policies, and procedures for managing the transferred web content as well as new content. The website now lives at: <http://judychicago.arted.psu.edu/>. On the site you can actually hear Chicago discuss the digital components and her belief in education "in perpetuity."

Agreement #2 – College of Arts and Architecture Endowment: The Foundation liquidated financial assets to establish two (2) endowments. The first endowment (\$170,000) was established within the College of Arts and Architecture as a program endowment for maintaining *The Dinner Party Curriculum* as a living curriculum (definition delineated below). This endowment included funds for a half-time (twenty-hour) graduate assistantship housed with the Art Education Department. The assistant, a Ph.D. candidate, began work on the collection in August 2011 preparing the Foundation website materials for transfer. The assistantship will continue annually and focus on identifying uses for the collection within undergraduate and graduate classes as well as maintaining the existing network of outreach for *The Dinner Party Curriculum*. The assistant provides the link between the past uses of the collection and the growth of digital opportunities for creating with the collection.

Agreement #3 – University Libraries Endowment: The Foundation established a maintenance endowment of \$25,000 within the University Libraries to provide for perpetual care of the entire manuscript collection and to create provisions for

<sup>4</sup> Keifer-Boyd, K. (2007). "From Content to Form: Judy Chicago's Pedagogy with Reflections by Judy Chicago." *Studies in Art Education*, 44(4): 315-334.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

a permanent cyber infrastructure. This particular endowment is anticipated to grow utilizing gifts from donors familiar with Chicago's work as well as events featuring Judy Chicago's work. As of January 2012 the cyber infrastructure piece is part of a larger Libraries program to provide preservation within a Dark Archive and usage links through the Digital Collections portal, see <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital.html>.

**Agreement #4 – Intellectual Property Rights:** This particular segment of the Deed of Gift was, perhaps, the most taxing as the entire donation had to reflect the transfer to Penn State of authorship rights, copyright, royalty licenses, contribution assignments, and sole use discretion clauses. Since Chicago is an actively producing artist, the language in these sections had to reflect just those segments meant to be part of this particular donation. The strictures of the language and the limitations of the scope of each right required detailed specifications relative to the segments of the collection being transferred as of spring 2011. Any additions to the collection will require amendments to the Deed as well as each of the rights protection clauses.

**Agreement #5 – Minx Auerbach Award Funds:** The Foundation annually awards funds to encourage use of *The Dinner Party Curriculum* in the name of Minx Auerbach. The award is a teaching excellence acknowledgment for K–12 teachers that provides funds distributed in conjunction with an annual conference held at Kutztown University. Both the award and the conference will move to Penn State University after a period of five years. The Auerbach Award will continue to be provided to encourage K–12 teachers to emulate Chicago's work in their own curriculum. The results of these curriculum development pieces will be added to the Judy Chicago collection.

**Agreement #6 – *The Dinner Party Curriculum* and related archival materials:** Over 12.5 cu. ft. of archival materials, slides, audiovisual interviews, artworks, and models make up the archival collection. The materials were delivered via registered art movers in mid-August. The finding aid for these materials was crafted and realized when the website opened in early September. The finding aid is available at: <https://secureapps.libraries.psu.edu/oliver/maint/details.cfm?collid=9028> or via the website. The archival collection has been utilized several times since its opening including as intellectual inspiration for diverse subject faculty at Penn State. The goal for the faculty session was to incorporate Judy Chicago's materials in their existing curriculum and encourage undergraduate and graduate students to utilize these primary source materials for their course-related projects.

**Agreement #7 – John Oakes "At Home" Project archival materials:** One of the few art pieces transferred with the collection was a 1:12 scale model of the At Home project created by Western Kentucky University Professor John Oakes. The model depicts the layout, structure, and message for the At Home project. This segment of the collection led to collaborative efforts with other Chicago collection sites such as Brook-

lyn Museum and the Schlesinger Library at Harvard. Any site holding Chicago materials is cross-listed on the new website and shares the finding aid across institutions. This collaborative exercise should help researchers use the collections as well as widen the avenues for resource-sharing and curriculum development across numerous repositories.

### ***The Dinner Party Curriculum* as a Living Curriculum**

*The Dinner Party* is one of Chicago's most known artworks, and it has significant value for art education. In 2007 *The Dinner Party Curriculum* Summer workshop was held in Kutztown University. It was designed for art teachers to develop curriculum through encounters that hold to the principles of *The Dinner Party*. The goal was to sustain the integrity of learning and remembering Women's history and to introduce it within the art and history K–12 curriculum. *The Dinner Party Curriculum* Online Project, developed by Marilyn Stewart, Peg Speirs, and Carrie Nordlund, under the directorship of Marilyn Stewart, and in collaboration with Judy Chicago and Constance Bumgarner Gee, was given by the Through the Flower organization to Penn State's College of Arts and Architecture for its Art Education program.

Through the Flower endowments to the College and the Libraries for additional development, support and promotion of Chicago's archival collection and *The Dinner Party Curriculum* function to create a "living curriculum" maintained in perpetuity at Penn State. With the support of these endowments and the 14 encounters that comprise *The Dinner Party Curriculum* Project, Penn State's Art Education program is instrumental in worldwide art education initiatives that promote the accomplishments of women. The related works will become part of the living archive of *The Dinner Party Curriculum* Project at <http://judychicago.arted.psu.edu/dpcp>.

### **Defining a Living Curriculum**

The entire Deed of Gift was predicated upon developing a working definition of a living curriculum. The Deed could not promise to create, provide resources, preserve, and make accessible such a curriculum unless all parties agreed to a singular definition. The definition is also, arguably, the single most important part of the Deed since it establishes the parameters for all current and future projects as well as subsequent donations. The definition reads:

Curricula are based on values and beliefs that describe how teaching and learning helps students come to understand the world in which they live.

A curricula that is framed around encounters with enduring ideas about lived experience gives teachers and students an opportunity for open-ended inquiry, self-reflection, and personal connections.

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*The Dinner Party Curriculum* is a living curriculum because learning is a fluid process that creates new ways to think about art content, diversity, and gender sensitivity through the use of inquiry, reflection, and expression.

As teachers and students adapt encounters with art and ideas within their own life experience based on principles of *The Dinner Party Curriculum* they will continue to create a living curriculum.

The need for a definition and the details herein establish this Deed of Gift as different from many others since it specifically reflects on the artist as creator as well as the user as creator.

### **Processing the Judy Chicago Collection: The Challenges of Hybridity**

Through arrangements made by the Penn State University Libraries, Ann Holt and Dr. Karen Keifer-Boyd travelled to Belen, New Mexico, in late July, to the home and studios of Judy Chicago and Donald Woodman. Archival processing supplies such as boxes of varying sizes and acid-free folders were shipped out in advance. Plans were set for Ann and Karen to meet Judy, review what materials would tentatively go to Penn State, as well as set up an area for processing the collection. Many of the initial discussions with Judy were centered on her teaching engagements and projects and this provided the foundation for organizing her materials. The total time allotted for gathering, inventorying, and packing the collection was one week minus one full day allowed for filming and interviews by Penn State's WPSU broadcasting team and half a day for attending an art opening in Santa Fe for Donald Woodman. From the beginning and throughout the entire week, conversations with Judy were recorded by Karen and Ann to use for future reference, to help clarify questions, and for making archival descriptions.

For Ann, as art educator and in this case archivist, the dialogue was crucial to getting a meaningful sense of the materials to mediate the transition from creation to collection. From an archival perspective, this experience validated and confirmed her convictions of the importance of cultivating broader awareness of what archives do and how they function in order to ensure continued interpretation of an art education scholarly heritage. From an art education perspective, it was an opportunity to make the journey from creation to collection as transparent as possible. Documenting the processing was vital for understanding how the collection would later be mediated again by the archivist on the other end, how it would be accessible and discoverable by users, and how individual items would be searchable when the collection arrived at the archives.

Recording and documenting teaching or research processes is a familiar method for art educators: it is similar to documenting teaching and/or creative activities. It helps to make the methods visible and allows a medium for reflexive practices. Every aspect of the processing was documented through audio recordings, photographs, journaling, and lists. By the

second day, a fairly solid collection series list was generated, so the processing began very efficiently. Empty acid-free boxes were set out in a neat row on the floor of the room where the processing was carried out and each box was labeled according to the list. Ann collected items from various parts of the home, studios, and offices including the Through the Flower office, and brought them into a cold storage area where both Chicago and Woodman store photographic materials and artwork. The contents were then duly transferred into acid-free folders, numbered, and noted with descriptions and dates. In parallel to these activities, Ann created an Excel spreadsheet for each box as well as an itemized inventory of the contents of each box.

As an art educator with some years of practical archival experience, it was interesting and challenging for Ann to process the Judy Chicago collection. This was an opportunity to tap into her experience and understanding of being both an art educator who uses archives and an archivist with the task of mediating art education materials for future uses. Therefore, for Ann, the challenge was in trying to fulfill both roles as archivist and art educator and process the collection in such a way that the archives staff would be able to make it accessible to users in very short order. Her goal was to create a preliminary inventory that satisfied archival standards and would be detailed enough for the user versed in art, art education, and art history to understand. It was determined that the collection would be made available to the public by the first week in September: two weeks after arriving at the archives via an art shipping company. The website was planned to be launched as soon as possible. Adding to the haste was the fact that the gift to Penn State from Judy Chicago had already made major headlines in the news and interested users were already requesting to visit the archives to see the materials.

The publicity aspect involving WPSU was coordinated for the second to last day of the processing time. Because of the efficiency in processing the materials, the film crew came from Penn State to film what unexpectedly turned out to be reenactments of some of the archival activities connected with the acquisition. They also conducted interviews with Judy Chicago, Karen, and Ann.

### **Public Access**

Multiple events surrounding the Judy Chicago collection will take place over the course of the next few years and are still in the planning stages. Events include a visit to Penn State by Judy Chicago to speak and engage with students and the public. This will be a celebration semester, planned for 2014, of symposiums and exhibitions throughout the University Park campus at the Palmer Museum of Art and the Library. Shortly after the arrival of the collection, Dr. Keifer-Boyd established a project called "Teaching Conversations." This was an opportunity among Penn State teaching faculty to have a brief introduction to the Collection, make connections from it to teaching, and to spark

ideas. Dr. Keifer-Boyd assembled a group of twelve interested Penn State colleagues in architecture, film, communications, art history, theatre, visual arts, art education, English/utopian studies, information science and technology, curriculum and instruction, and women's studies to start conversation about the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection, particularly about ways to use it in their curriculum.

The idea of generating discussion around the Judy Chicago collection is to attract those who normally do not use archives to begin to imagine the potential and relevancy of archives in their work, and to cultivate a new user group and a new generation of archives users. There are several ways that this idea is being developed. It is evolving as more people become familiar with the collection and what it means to be able to access it in an archive. What has been particularly interesting through this process is the discovery that education and outreach need to be done to get people familiar not only with an art education archive but to archives in general. For instance, for K–12 teachers interested in the collection, most of them are discovering “archives” for the first time. They are discovering at a basic level that archives are open to everyone and anyone who is interested in using them. The value of archives needs to be more emphasized to a broader public, which is an obvious concept to readers of this paper. What this means collectively is that teachers, scholars, artists, or any other potential user must, in effect, be educated to what an archive is and does—as well as understand that they are welcome to access them. Simultaneously, those who are the stewards of archives must reimagine who the user is as well as how collections might be used and repurposed in alternative ways.

In this regard, the notion of a “Living Curriculum” is the key component in making the Judy Chicago art education collection publicly accessible. It is user-driven and user-generated; it goes beyond the content to emphasize the possibilities in repurposing the records for research, teaching, learning, or creative practices. *The Dinner Party Curriculum* is considered living because learning and teaching are generative, fluid processes situated in changing times and places. Inquiry, research,

creation, critical dialogue, and reflection in the encounters of *The Dinner Party Curriculum* bring new issues and awareness of art content, diversity, social justice, and equity. As teachers and students adapt encounters with feminist art, ideas, and art pedagogy within their own life experience based on principles of *The Dinner Party Curriculum*, they will continue to create a living curriculum.

Thinking about archival collections in an academic setting as living curricula provides a useful way for archivists to think about what it means to house a collection “in perpetuity.” Over time, collections continually generate new processes and new patterns of thinking, teachers generate new content from them, artists create new pieces inspired by them, researchers ask new questions from them, since learning is always an evolving process.

## SESSION 7

# The Conflict Between Archives and Artist Monumentalization

Allison Hemler, Director of Archives and Communications, The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

The records of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation do not fit within the “traditional” boundaries of the artist’s archive. By presenting case studies I’ll explain how many pieces of the archive serve to guide, but not define, decision-making at the Foundation, and how, by adopting a method of cross-referencing, we have created our own internal archive with the use of multiple sources to avoid monumentalization of the artist and his work. Monumentalization is a strong word: it literally means to make concrete, to commemorate, in a way, to freeze in time. Gonzalez-Torres built constructs around his work that resist the ability for work to exist concretely. At its core, the Foundation attempts to emulate the artist’s intentions, revisiting time and time again his insistence for the work to guide us when giving advice to curators installing his work.

### The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation was created in 2002, six years after the artist’s death, by the executrix of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres estate, Andrea Rosen. Our mission is as follows:

The Foundation is dedicated to the promotion of visual and creative arts. In furtherance of this educational mission, the Foundation fosters appreciation and study of the works of Felix Gonzalez-Torres among the general public, scholars and art historians, and educates people about the nature of the work and fabrication, installation, exhibition and de-installation of the work. The Foundation also sponsors books and projects and facilitates the organization of public exhibitions worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

We hold the copyright to all of the works of the artist and issue non-exclusive license agreements for publishing images and the written word of the artist. We do not authenticate any artwork, but rather accredit, as we have a record of what Gonzalez-Torres considered a work. Our mission is absolutely crucial, as it should be for any organization, in deciding what materials are available for research, and which are not publicly available. Education was one of Gonzalez-Torres’s primary missions in his lifetime, as a professor, lecturer, and artist. We attempt to carry out his mission post-death and try the very best to mimic his intentions. At the moment, we are able to provide access to our extensive library of exhibition catalogues, comprehensive press, ephemeral material from exhibitions, and our archive of installation images. Over the past year, while we’ve had numerous e-mail reference queries, we’ve had five researchers visit the Foundation, which is a lot considering we don’t have our own

dedicated space.

### The Work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Felix Gonzalez-Torres was born in Cuba, and became a U.S. citizen in 1979. He studied at Pratt Institute, and received an MFA from International Center of Photography/NYU. First and foremost, he considered himself a photographer. His early work from the late 1980s includes photographic images of crowds, and framed black photostats with lines of white text of words and dates. In 1990, a seminal exhibition of Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ work opened at Andrea Rosen Gallery. This was the first exhibition for the gallery at 130 Prince Street in SoHo. Consisting almost solely of stacks of paper on the floor, a checklist for the exhibition states the title, medium and dimensions for each work, followed by “PLEASE TAKE ONE”.

Artworks by Felix Gonzalez-Torres include, but are not limited to, piles of candy, free to take; light strings hanging in a variety of formations; beaded curtains; commercially printed billboards; offset printed stacks of paper; wall-painted text portraits; and even static works like photo puzzles in plastic bags, framed photographs, drawings, and paintings. What is so interesting about the manifestable works is that in physical reality, they do not exist. There is one original Certificate of Authenticity and Ownership, which names the owner of the work, and indicates guidelines for fabrication and installation, describing the rights and responsibilities of the work for the owner, who passes on this to the borrower of the work for each exhibition.<sup>2</sup> Because there are not strict rules for a piece, but guidelines for manifestation, the work’s appearance, color, shape, size, paper type, ink, height, or weight may differ from exhibition to exhibition. Every piece not only has an exhibition history, but also a visual history, where the installation of every piece looks different from the previous. This is the crux of the work: its capacity for change, for its perpetual existence, the resistance of the monumentalization of the art object, frozen in time. These are works for which the past guides, but does not define the future. No one installation is the piece, but every installation is the piece.

Gonzalez-Torres inventoried every work he considered a “piece” with Andrea Rosen Gallery. His oeuvre begins in 1986 and lasts until 1995, with the bulk of his work made between 1990 and 1995. He died in 1996 at the age of 38 from AIDS-related complications. Only those that were very close to him knew of his impending death. It was not public knowledge that he was sick, as making this public would limit the readings of his work. He was a very private person with the thought that if

<sup>1</sup> The most up-to-date mission statement can be found on the Foundation’s website at <http://www.felixgonzalez-torresfoundation.org>.

<sup>2</sup> The Certificate of Authenticity and Ownership is a confidential document that should not be disseminated. Certificates are not available for study at the Foundation.

many personal details are made public, people will read it into the work, and use it against you. These details may lead one to understand work through a very specific lens of identity politics: in Gonzalez-Torres's case, the fact that he was gay, Latino, or HIV-positive.

Throughout his career, he continuously and consciously wanted to separate himself, Gonzalez-Torres, from the interpretation of his work. The beauty of his work is the ability for a viewer to bring his or her history to the work, creating an ever-evolving timeline of interpretations, meanings, and memories. Every work, with few exceptions, is entitled *Untitled*, sometimes with a parenthetical title. The intention of the title prevents the viewer from imparting a specific meaning or language on a piece.

Gonzalez-Torres did not have a studio. The gallery was his studio: the first time he saw a piece was usually after it was installed. He had ideas for pieces that required fabrication. He sometimes sketched very general ideas, like a box to represent a stack of papers, or a bunch of squiggles to represent a candy piece. His light strings were primarily fabricated by one person, who still works with the Foundation to this day in the creation of exhibition copies.

### The Archive

What is Gonzalez-Torres's archive? Since he did not have a studio, there was no specific place where records existed; they're everywhere. Andrea Rosen Gallery kept an extensive archive; he would bring items in, such as negatives for photographic works, to add to the files. He would fax articles of interest from *The New York Times*, correspondence regarding exhibitions, project proposals, short notes to confirm if works still existed or if they should be destroyed.

The items compiled from his home comprise the personal archive. It included his collection of toys, George Nelson clocks, and his personal library, all of which were disseminated by Andrea Rosen and his close friend Julie Ault to friends after his death, as well as all of the folders, files, anything paper that was left behind. An inventory of the items packed into boxes and stored at the gallery was finally completed by the Foundation this summer, 15 years after his death. Among the private financial, medical, and property records are research files about works and notes about lectures, and items that may or may not have been an inspiration for work.

How do you separate one's life from one's art, when art is life? There's a gray area of what information is personal (private), and what's art (public). Wholly personal documents, like snapshots of Felix's partner Ross, or of his dog, or of love letters between Felix and Ross, become public by turning them into a photo puzzle or a print. Gonzalez-Torres was adamant about

restricting details of his personal life as he wanted the work to speak for itself. He generally refused to allow pictures of himself for exhibitions, and gave very few interviews. His lectures were about the state of culture and politics; in most lectures he wouldn't talk about his work. Somewhat conflicting ideas can be found within interviews; in one, he states "I can't separate my art from my life"<sup>3</sup> and years later "I'm not my art. It's not the form and not the shape, not the way these things function that's being put into question. What's being put into question is me."<sup>4</sup> While he wanted his life to be separate from that of his work, it can't be ignored that the nature of being a human being is that we do want to be remembered after our death.

Gonzalez-Torres indicated he wanted his correspondence with Ross to go to an archive; preservation photocopies of the correspondence are in the Special Collections at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. But his decision to make this a research collection did not mean that he felt the same about the rest of his materials: sources, correspondence, sketchbooks, articles with passages underlined and starred. It may be years until these materials from the personal archive are preserved and confidential information is removed. But we have to proceed with caution: the decision of what is valuable and what can be made accessible is not an easy one to make.

It's important to note that he was one of the first artists of his generation to die. In his will, there was no mention of a foundation. There was also not enough time to figure out what fate he wanted for his personal papers or how to answer any of the practical questions regarding the work: what will happen when this specific candy doesn't exist anymore, when this paper doesn't exist anymore, if photo labs no longer make puzzles from snapshots? For works that are created anew for every exhibition: what is one to do when something used originally ceases to exist? *One adapts to what exists in order to ensure the work continues to live.* This was something he ingrained in everyone who worked with him. The nature of the work is that the piece *Untitled (Rossmore II)*, comprised of 75 lbs of candy at ideal weight and originally green ovals with embossed bees on the top and bottom, when installed, does not require the exact candy from the initial installation. In fact, at least four different kinds of candy have been used to manifest this work. The original provides a guideline, but when the work is fabricated, it doesn't require the exact color, shape or flavor of the original candy. This is how the work has a continuous life.

### Source Material

The source of the work is often of interest to scholars; where did an idea come from, and was it documented somewhere? Gonzalez-Torres once said: "The voyeuristic idea that whatever the artist sketches or does is interesting, is not interesting to

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Bruce Ferguson in the Rhetorical Image exhibition catalogue, New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Rob Storr in *Artpress* 198, January 1995.

## SESSION 7

me. That's stuff for *People* [magazine]."<sup>5</sup> The Foundation, as well as any scholar of the artist's work, needs to be careful to not take the written documents, the artist's hand, as bible for every situation, as many times what was written down may have contradicted what was said. His work constantly redefines what the meaning of "artist records" such as drawings, sketches, and notations are in relationship to his work. For 90% of his work, there are no drawings, there is no official source. For some, there is the original clipping in the *New York Times*. *Untitled*, a stack of white paper at approximately 42 by 58 inches, is printed with a different black and white photocopied clipping on each side; each clipping measures approximately 1 1/2 by 3 inches, which is extremely small on the printed sheet. This work, like all the stacks, is printed anew for every exhibition; the stacks put into question how information is disseminated; Gonzalez-Torres was very particular about editing down to what is essential for the most dramatic impact.

The original piece of newspaper, preserved in our Foundation archives, provides a great deal of information. In the work itself, photocopied on a commercially printed sheet of paper, if you even had taken the time to stop and see the clipping in the middle of the paper, you have practically no context for where this information came from.

Gonzalez-Torres had never recorded source articles for clippings used from newspapers, magazines, or catalogues. However, while preparing this presentation, I was able to locate the original article via Google: "Airport Drug Efforts Snaring Innocents Who Fit 'Profiles'" from March 24, 1990, in *The New York Times*. However, a Google search came up empty for the first clipping. I can't help but wonder if locating this original article changes the meaning of the work. Could Gonzalez-Torres predict how the Internet and accessibility of information would possibly change the meaning of his works? Since I just told you the context for the article, it may begin to close down what you feel the message of the work is trying to convey. Is it a commentary on racial profiling? Is it about identity? Is it solely about the way information is disseminated and presented? I work every day towards ensuring that all of these are valid, that there is no single reading, that no one is the truth. These are all questions I would propose to a researcher. I provide guidance for where to look, but nowhere in the archive will provide a definitive answer, because it doesn't exist.

### The Possibility of Change

While Gonzalez-Torres could not predict changes in technology, his work allowed for the possibility of change: sometimes changes in standards, such as measurements and paper sizes in the United States and in Europe. In a sketch done by the artist for the piece *Untitled* (NRA - National Rifle Association) in 1990, the length and width of the paper is approximately 29 by 23 inches, with a height of 20 to 22 inches. In the sketch, he in-

dicates the measurements as "approximate" (it should be noted that for the candy pieces, for instance, when giving instructions, he would say, at least 350 pounds, but wouldn't require the exact weight). In a piece of follow-up correspondence, a dealer faxes the gallery asking for a change in dimensions based on German standard paper sizes. Gonzalez-Torres OK's the changes in dimensions to 33 2/3 x 26 2/3 inches. The final certificate of authenticity, as well as the inventory book, lists the dimensions of the original installation as 84.3 cm x 66.8 cm by 50.3 cm (20 in.) high. So while the original proposal is documented by the artist and signed at 29 x 23 inches, it is documented in the Certificate of Authenticity, a document signed by the artist, at the dimensions that it was originally installed at, not proposed. Is an "OK - FGT" note on the correspondence, to be interpreted that it is OK specifically for this installation, or should future installations should be reverted back to the dimensions originally proposed? The original drawing the artist made is not attached to the certificate nor is it provided in the form of a loan document. The original dimensions are used as a guideline for future installations, keeping in mind, but not enforcing the proposed dimensions. This was the same for all of the stacks. Sizes could be adjusted based on standards, types of paper adjusted based on local availability. While there is an "ideal height" listed for every stack piece, this is also a fluctuating variable. Certain stacks, like the one I referred to earlier with the newsclippings, are intended to be printed extremely large. The NRA stack, however, is intended to be printed at a smaller, paste-up poster size. There is an intention in the size, but there is no rule to the exact size the version produced for the next exhibition should be. Therefore, we cannot concretize these dimensions by requiring adherence to the original installation.

### The Painted Portrait: "This is Not a Static Work"

There is further evidence that Gonzalez-Torres did not want to be forever concretized in his work. In 1990, in what was the beginning of the painted portrait pieces as commissions for collectors or institutions, he installed his self-portrait at the Brooklyn Museum: a collection of painted words and dates reading "Red Canoe 1987 Paris 1985 Blue Flowers 1984 Harry the Dog 1983 Blue Lake 1986 Interferon 1989 Ross 1983." This work, like a Sol LeWitt wall drawing or a building sliced in half by Gordon Matta Clark awaiting demolition, does not physically exist after its installation, except in documentation. Yet this work can be reinstalled again and again. Like a wall drawing, it has the possibility to differ based on its installation site. Unlike a wall drawing, however, it has the capacity to change in form and content in a substantial way. Like most of his works, the certificate lacks explicit instructions, and relies on the owner, in this case, the Art Institute and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, to continue its evolution.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Tim Rollins in *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, Art Press, 1993.

During his lifetime, Gonzalez-Torres installed six different versions of his portrait. As of 2011, there have been at least twenty versions of the portrait installed. After one submitted a list of events and dates to the artist, Gonzalez-Torres added dates of important events or places, sometimes events that happened before a collector was born, stressing how each one of us is changed and influenced by events that happened before “our birth or in places we have never been to.” The owner has the right to add or subtract events at will. What a responsibility the owner is given: he or she has the capacity to change and document what events in his/her life make up her portrait. In the case of the self-portrait, the current owners have the right to add or subtract dates. Gonzalez-Torres relinquished any desire he had to define himself, by allowing events after his death to shape the way the public views the artist. He is quoted as saying “I need the public to complete the work.” The archive for this work is not an explanation of the meanings of each of the words and dates, but rather a history of how the work has progressed over time. There are bits and pieces that one may recognize as people and events that have shaped the artist: one can recognize “Ross” if familiar with the artist or his dog “Harry.” Since Gonzalez-Torres indicated he “needs the viewer to complete the work,” it is clear that the portraits are one of the most amazing indicators that no person lives by a single biography. In turn, this has served to inspire the way our archive at the Foundation is structured, and how many archives should be approached. Our memories shift, and our present, at any one moment, is never the same as the last.

### **The Foundation Archives**

The archive which we’ve created at the Foundation, in lieu of a traditional archive, is a living, breathing set of documents that are cross-referenced from an amalgamation of sources with provenance of each document notated. We then provide scholars, curators, and owners with installation assistance or answers to reference questions based on the evidence that we have. No decision is made from a sole source.

One of the most crucial underpinnings of the work is its continuous existence. In order for the work to exist, it needs to have a past, present, and future. With this in mind, we constructed a FileMaker Pro database to document every work, every exhibition, every piece of literature, every image. As the artist’s work is collaborative between the Foundation, the owner, and the borrower, so does the database have to act as a vehicle for collaboration. Works are connected to exhibitions, which are connected to literature entries, which are connected to the image database, which are connected back to exhibitions, and to archival material from exhibitions. And so on. While the creation of a database is not a new concept, our model at the Foundation is to create a new possibility for what an artist’s foundation can be and the way that information can be tracked. The database acts as a tool to assist in future installations, providing previous fabrication information to aid in decision-making and to record oral histories and to find what kind of photographic material we own in order to fabricate a billboard work or to purchase candies from a local vendor. Through our database, our mission is achieved by documenting the artist’s work in order to educate those interested in his work. In this way, the work is unable to be closed down, as every record can be connected; and a clipping, drawing, or even a short note become not the source, but a source to get to the final piece.

## SESSION 8

# Born Digital: Ensuring Access to Artists' Records Created by Emerging Technologies

## Introduction

Ben Fino-Radin, Rhizome at the New Museum

Regardless of medium, the studio practice of all artists has been deeply affected by the ubiquity of technology. From artists who use technology as a tool for planning and communication, to those who engage in the creative landscape of the web and other platforms, the new nature of artists' records calls not only for new strategies of preservation, documentation, and access, but also a fundamental reconsideration of how and when these materials are collected. In this session we heard two perspectives on the stewardship of born-digital artists' records. Heather Saunders provided a checklist of best practices for artists, outlining a documentation-based approach for ensuring that one's ephemeral social media activity will not disappear before being deemed archives-worthy. Dennis Moser's presentation offered a look toward two emerging challenges for archives: virtual worlds and augmented reality.

## Archiving Social Media Content by Visual Artists

Heather Saunders, MLIS, MA (Art History)

When Internet art emerged as an art form, librarians, archivists, museologists, and visual resources professionals rallied together to ensure its longevity with impressive checklists for best practices. In the past few years, a new challenge has arisen in the realm of archiving that which is born digital: artists have been turning to social media. Sometimes it's in the spirit of Internet art or post-digital art, which is the more contemporary term. For example, there's *We Feel Fine* by Jonathan Harris and Sep Kamvar (2005-present). This work is featured in the *Social Media* exhibition at The New York Pace/MacGill Gallery until October 16, 2011 and it strives to quantify global emotional well-being by harvesting sentences that include the words "I feel" or "I am feeling" from new blog posts. This is not unlike Zach Gage's social information mining project (2009-present), *Best Day Ever*, which scans Twitter for the phrase "best day ever" and then randomly re-tweets one of the posts daily at 6:30 pm.

A quotation comes to mind in relation to a show at Dianne Ferris Gallery in Vancouver last year called *Twitter/Art + Social Media*. The Vancouver Courier reported, "It's impossible to ignore the fact that social media is becoming the inspiration, subject and vehicle to promote art."<sup>1</sup> It's this latter element—the use of social media as a way to get the word out—that will be the focus of my presentation because it strikes me as a grey area that gets left out of archiving. As avid blogger and artist Iviva Olenick has commented, artists are beginning to use so-

cial media as an extension of their art—not as the art itself as in the aforementioned projects—and that's where I see it as a grey area.<sup>2</sup>

As an academic art librarian, I noticed that instructors' requests for sessions with studio students were research-oriented, and were not intended to address archiving. As for workshops with faculty, instructional energy was generally focused on getting started with social media: demonstrating to users the differences between blogging platforms, showing them how to navigate Twitter, and advising them on how to create an online persona on Facebook that was compatible with instructors' colleagues as well their students. This was not unique to the library at which I was employed. Workshops from other academic libraries have titles like "Social Media 101" and "Anyone Can Blog or Twitter." My impression was that attendees seemed overwhelmed by the thought of dipping a toe into the water of social media, so it seemed inadvisable to broach reasons for archiving content and strategies for doing so.

This partial advice is by no means restricted to the world of information professionals: if you look at online sources like Natasha Wescoat's eight social media tips for artists, the suggestions center around getting started with social media.<sup>3</sup> For example, advice includes experimenting and forming relationships. Similarly, on the site <http://emptyeasel.com>, advice for artists putting the "final touch" on Twitter focuses on setting up RSS feed capability, not archiving.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Art Exhibit all a Twitter about Social Media," *The Vancouver Courier*, March 25, 2010, <http://www.vancouver.courier.com/entertainment/exhibit+twitter+about+social+media/2727485/story.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication with Iviva Olenick, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> "Eight Social Media Tips from Artist Natasha Westcoat," *Internet Marketing*, July 9, 2009, <http://internetgettomarketing.blogspot.com/2009/07/eight-social-media-tips-from-artist.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Dan -----, "Twitter Search: How to Directly Market your Art (or Anything Else) on Twitter," Empty Easel, November 17, 2008, <http://emptyeasel.com/2008/11/17/twitter-search-how-to-directly-market-your-art-or-anything-else-on-twitter>.

Social media already competes for a lot of our time. Witness the visual entitled “What Can You Accomplish in One Week of Web 2.0?” that Nina Simon, executive director of the Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz, showed recently in a presentation to museum professionals. The far end of the spectrum, well beyond 10+ hours, says “go nuts,” which sounds as much like an enthusiastic blessing to embrace social media as it does a dire warning to safeguard sanity.<sup>5</sup> Archiving also takes time, and it flies in the face of advice from people like the artist Loren Munk, who uses the pseudonym, James Kalm, in writing, “Have fun, speak out, but don’t let it [the art blogosphere] cut too much into your studio time; you might end up in a twelve step-program.”<sup>6</sup>

I represent two ends of the spectrum, and am putting myself on display in that context. I have two blogs. “Art by Heather Saunders” (<http://artbyheathersaunders.blogspot.com>) promotes my work directly, with images, press releases for shows, my CV, and artist statement. Admittedly, I have done nothing to archive this blog. My other blog, “Artist in Transit” (<http://artistintransit.blogspot.com>), contains art and cultural criticism. In it, I write about the sources that inform my art. I’ve been cross-promoting it on Facebook and Twitter, and archiving it has become a labor of love. That got me thinking about what other artists were doing, if anything, to document the content they generate on social media in the process of promoting their art.

I used Fluid Surveys to poll my artist network on Facebook (Appendix 1). I didn’t have contact information for all of the people connected with my Twitter account or blog, which is why I chose this group. I found that virtually all of the artists using Facebook use it to promote their art, half of them also have a blog to promote their art, and a minority use Twitter to promote their art.<sup>7</sup> (Incidentally, Twitter is probably the form of social media of least concern for archiving since the Library of Congress is archiving all public tweets). At any rate, the survey indicates a pressing need to guide artists in archiving their social media content, since only twenty percent said they were satisfied with their degree of documentation.

The good news for information professionals is that the majority of impediments to archiving are a lack of time or strategies. The need to convince artists of the value of their social media content accounts for the minority of responses, represented by the following statements: “It hasn’t crossed my mind” (40%), “I can’t picture someone using my social media content as future research material” (20%), and “I think of these media as ephemeral” (25%).

The majority of reasons for not prioritizing the archiving of art-related social media were “I’m too busy” (20%), “I wouldn’t know how to go about it” (30%), “I don’t want to invest in a fee service to do the archiving for me” (15%), and “I wasn’t aware of free services, such as ThinkUp, that could do the archiving for me” (55%). This indicates that artists could indeed benefit from advice about archiving.

When I set about archiving my blog, I thought of artists like Carolee Schneeman, who has kept a carbon copy of every letter she has ever mailed as well as the reply letters; and of Marina Abramovic, who has kept a copy of every email she has sent or received. In my mind, there’s no such thing as being too comprehensive. From personal experience, or more accurately, trial and error, I recommend the following to artists:

- Keep data from statistical programs like StatCounter and GoogleAnalytics, which 15% of the artists practice. You can learn a great deal about your audience, such as their geographical location and their search terms. I’m guilty of not keeping records from StatCounter, which means I lose data older than two months. The kind of information that is slipping away is that 60% of my blog hits are from people who are actually looking for Katy Perry. They’ve searched for her cupcake bra but instead reach my post about my own cupcake bra, which doubles as a post about copyright, at <http://www.artistintransit.blogspot.com/2010/06/california-gurl-canadian-girl.html>
- Keep records of webpages that you have linked to, which 10% of artists practice. I learned the hard way that not only do webpages disappear, leaving dead links, but also sometimes they change just enough to make what you’ve written about them misleading. For example, I connected some embroideries I’d made based on stock photography images of women eating cupcakes in a sexually suggestive manner to a poster I saw on the Metro North train for Kirstie Alley’s television show, *Big Life*. The image changed just enough to make my detailed description of it seem inaccurate.
- Keep records of comments, @replies, retweeting, sharing, or liking of art-related posts, which 10% of artists practice. Facebook and Twitter might be more protected, but from personal experience, I can say that when you least expect it, your blog can disappear. I had a work-related WordPress blog that was lost unexpectedly, never to be retrieved. I also have concerns about my current blog being removed. To contextualize my work, which is about representations of female sexuality, I review exhibitions with titles like *The Visible Vagina* and *Sex*

<sup>5</sup> Nina Simon, “How Much Time Does Web 2.0 Take?,” *Web 2.0*, April 10, 2008, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2008/04/how-much-time-does-web-20-take.html>

<sup>6</sup> James Kalm, “Brooklyn Dispatches: Virtually Overwhelmed,” *The Brooklyn Rail*, 13, September 13, 2008, <http://brooklynrail.org/2008/09/artseen/brooklyn-dispatches-virtually-overwhelmed>.

<sup>7</sup> Of the 21 respondents, 20 use Facebook to promote their art, 10 have a blog to promote their art, and 5 use Twitter to promote their art. The answers from the single respondent who used Facebook but did not use Facebook or any other any social media for promoting art has been removed from further statistics (i.e., n = 20 not 21).

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*Cells*. I hope that the blog would remain up even if someone insisted it needed an advisory warning, but you can never be too careful. If it disappeared, with it would go any comments on the posts.

- Keep records of webpages, Facebook posts, and @mentions that have linked to you, which 10% of artists do. As an emerging feminist artist, it was a coup for me to have my film review linked to Joan Braderman's page for *The Heretics*, which is about the New York-based magazine from the 1970s. By documenting links to my blog, I see myself as making the job of potential researchers easier by gathering these sources, rather than hoping that these sites will still be around in the future.
- Keep contact information for people who follow you or interact with you on social media in relation to your art, either as themselves or through pseudonyms, which 35% of artists do. Incidentally, from the list of five strategies artists were polled about, this was the most popular archiving strategy. When asked for additional strategies, no one had any, which reinforces that the artists polled are the most conscientious about protecting contact information.

Consider the information taken for granted in letters that are now goldmines for researchers. For example, a love letter from Frida Kahlo requires a whole paragraph in endnotes to explain the identities of people who are only mentioned by first name. Bringing this into a contemporary context, imagine how confounded researchers will be by commenters' nicknames like ArtTamali and profile photos of someone or something other than themselves, like a photo of their baby or of a celebrity. Even though artists can use programs to document social media activity, that technology can't fill in the gaps of who these pseudonymous people are that interact with them.

Another reason to track this contact information is that artists are validated by more seasoned artists expressing interest in their work. I was delighted when I discovered that one of my mere seven Twitter followers was Canadian conceptual artist Ian Baxter&. Documentation of such things could go a long way towards proving an artist's worth to researchers one day. If he stops following me, however, the record of his interest is gone forever without my archive.

If I were to add a sixth recommendation, it would be to consider having paper records in addition to digital records. Seventy percent of the artists polled maintained exclusively digital records. As Kurt D. Bollacker writes in the article "Avoiding a Digital Dark Age," "there seems to be no getting away from occasionally reverting to this outdated media type" of hard copies

stored in multiple locations.<sup>8</sup> Artists could take their cue from institutions like the National Gallery of Canada and Artexte in Montreal: they make printouts of digital invitations and press releases to store in artists' files.

In the book, *Content Nation: Surviving and Thriving as Social Media Changes Our Work, Our Lives, Our Future*, Jonathan Blossom notes that his ideas were originally published on his blog and then as a book and then in Google Books, and that at each point of re-publishing content is rediscovered.<sup>9</sup> My concern is that if we don't advocate for the archiving of social media content among artists, the opportunity for future researchers to engage with that content may be jeopardized. Admittedly, this interferes with the active life of records, by promoting standards that exceed the creator's immediate needs, but ultimately it respects artists' desire to promote their work beyond the fleeting Twitterverse and blogosphere. Back in 2004, Dempsey and Lavoie wrote, "If...preservation considerations must be taken into account at the time of a digital object's creation, it is authors and publishers, rather than libraries and archives, who must take the first steps towards securing the long-term persistence of digital materials."<sup>10</sup> Thus, it is advisable to encourage artists to document their activity on social media. I hope that by introducing some of these suggestions into workshops on social media, we can ensure that artists are in control of their own legacies.

<sup>8</sup> Kurt D. Bollacker, "Avoiding a Digital Dark Age," *Computing Science*, 98, no. 3 (May/June 2010), accessed October 1, 2010, <http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/pub/avoiding-a-digital-dark-age/1>.

<sup>9</sup> John Blossom, *Content Nation: Surviving and Thriving as Social Media Changes our Work, our Lives, our Future*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2009. PDF e-book.

<sup>10</sup> Lorcan Dempsey & Brian Lavoie, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at...Digital Preservation," *D-Lib Magazine*, 10, no. 7/8, ¶17, (July/August 2004) accessed October 1, 2010, <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/july04/lavoie/07lavoie.html>.

## Appendix 1: Survey conducted via Fluid Surveys (40 polled, 21 responded)

1/ Do you use any of the following to promote your art?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ blog

2/ In the context of promoting your art on social media, do you keep records of any of the following? If any of the following do not apply, please leave it blank.

- ☐ (a) data from statistical analysis programs, such as StatCounter or Google Analytics
- ☐ (b) copies of webpages you have linked to
- ☐ (c) copies of webpages, Facebook posts, or @Mentions that have linked to you
- ☐ (d) comments/@Replies as well as sharing/retweeting/liking of your art-related posts
- ☐ (e) contact information for people who either follow you or interact with you on social media in relation to your art, either as themselves or through pseudonyms

3/ If you answered 'yes' in #2, are any of your records on paper? Please indicate which letter(s).

4/ Are you satisfied with the level of documentation you have of your blog, Facebook account and/or Twitter account that you use in promoting your art?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

5/ If you answered 'no' to question 4, do you agree with any of the following? I don't document the content I generate on social media to create my art because...

- ☐ I think of these media as ephemeral.
- ☐ I can't picture someone using my social media content as future research material.
- ☐ It hasn't crossed my mind.
- ☐ I'm too busy.
- ☐ I wouldn't know how to go about it.
- ☐ I don't want to invest in a fee service to do the archiving for me.
- ☐ I wasn't aware of free services, such as ThinkUp, that could do the archiving for me.

6/ Are there any strategies you would like to share for documenting social media content for artists?

## SESSION 8

### Extended Abstract:

## In The Blink of a Digital Eye: How Galleries, Special Collections, Archives, and Museums Must Anticipate the Arts of the Future

Dennis Moser, University of Wyoming

Documentation is a key factor in how archives and special collections libraries create collections of artists' records. In a period of rapid changes, including social, cultural, and technological, how these two institutions identify and respond to the changes in the dimensions of documentation will greatly determine what will be left of the future cultural heritage record. Emergent technologies such as virtual and augmented reality are deeply social and their long-term impact upon the creation, manifestation, and appreciation of art are only just beginning to be perceived. Initiatives such as "Brooklyn Is Watching" and its spin-offs reflect how a "new" art scene heavily dependent upon these and other technologies is developing, with or without the sanction of the old "new guard." This paper examines how organizations such as Rhizome, the Variable Media Network, and the Electric Arts Intermix — who all have an historical involvement studying and addressing these trends — may or may not be responding to ensure the an archival home for these new works. Visual materials accompanying this paper can be found at [http://uwyo.academia.edu/DennisMoser/Talks/57899/In\\_The\\_Blink\\_of\\_a\\_Digital\\_Eye\\_How\\_Galleries\\_Special\\_Collections\\_Archives\\_and\\_Museums\\_Must\\_Anticipate\\_the\\_Arts\\_of\\_Future](http://uwyo.academia.edu/DennisMoser/Talks/57899/In_The_Blink_of_a_Digital_Eye_How_Galleries_Special_Collections_Archives_and_Museums_Must_Anticipate_the_Arts_of_Future)

### "Nanos gigantium humeris insidentes"

There are significant historical attempts to document and preserve the "new media arts" spanning back easily more than twelve years. Within a few brief years of the development of the Internet as a viable venue for artistic experimentation and expression, there sprang up initiatives that recognized the fugitive aspects of these new creations. One early effort, the Lost Formats Preservation Society, was founded in 2000, with the stated "sole purpose is to save formats from obscurity."<sup>1</sup> Their orientation was to the carrier, but not the content and came out of the graphic design world, the Society having been announced in an issue of *Émigré* magazine (*Émigré* 57).<sup>2</sup> Experimental Jetset itself started out as a graphic design studio and their website functions in quasi-archival manner, documenting their activities and those of others as the web began to evolve into a more robust aesthetic environment.<sup>3</sup>

Just one year earlier, in 1999, the Rhizome ArtBase had been founded with a slightly different mission: nothing less than "an online archive of digital art" and this at a time when such work was just beginning to be shared through the World Wide Web. The earliest work in the ArtBase, Lev Manovich's "Little Movies," was created almost from the beginning of the Web, spanning the period of 1994 to 1997.

In September of 2002, Richard Rinehart produced "Preserving the Rhizome ArtBase," wherein Rhizome.org was described as "an online platform for the global new media art community" and declared ArtBase as "an online archive of new media."<sup>4</sup> Rhinehart explained how the original focus of ArtBase was on "net art" projects but was being expanded to include "software, games, and web-based documentation of installation and performance works." This is where things start to get interesting, indeed. The realization of ArtBase's function as a tool for preservation *and* a system of documentation was being combined with the artworks themselves—every programmer's dream of a self-documenting body of code. It also anticipated the future work the "Preserving Virtual Worlds" report issued September, 2010.<sup>5</sup>

These two efforts were among several early initiatives that were recognizing the tremendous potential being offered from the digital technologies while acknowledging that these technologies also carried severe challenges for the preservation of the works being created. While they were among the first to "sound the alarm," the alarm has continued to be sounded, drawing attention to the need to continue to investigate how best to document and preserve the now-myriad forms of "new media art." During the ensuing years, projects have sprung up such as the Digital Preservation Coalition and the aforementioned Preserving Virtual Worlds project, among others, that are looking at strategies, models, and modes of documentation.<sup>6</sup>

### Documentation: Models, Modes, and Strategies

In the interim, since those pioneering steps by Rhizome and others, several institutions have been developing refined approaches to the documentation and preservation of new media

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.experimentaljetset.nl/archive/lostformats.html> (Accessed October, 2011). This webpage presents an excellent historical look at how a shift in attitude about form and content was taking place.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.emigre.com/EMag.php?issue=57> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>3</sup> The "About" page details this evolution. <http://www.experimentaljetset.nl/misc/about.html> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>4</sup> <http://archive.rhizome.org:8080/artbase/preserving-the-rhizome-artbase-richard-rinehart/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>5</sup> <http://pvw.illinois.edu/pvw/?p=224> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dpconline.org/> (Accessed October, 2011)

art. The following list of institutions lays out the breadth of this work:

1. The DOCAM Research Alliance: Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage <http://www.docam.ca/>
  - a. “The DOCAM Documentation Model offers a framework that enables the structuring of a digital file of artwork or “Digital Workfile.” The model brings together, organizes and makes accessible the documentation created by various contributors throughout the lifecycle of a media artwork. It is rendered through a graphic interface that illustrates the links between the work’s documents, producers, lifecycle steps, successive iterations, and components.”<sup>7</sup>
  - b. They are a multidisciplinary initiative in Canada, including in membership the National Gallery of Canada, the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the Canadian Centre for Architecture, as well as a number of other associated organizations throughout Canada.
2. Forging the Future’s<sup>8</sup> The Variable Media Questionnaire<sup>9</sup>
  - a. This project by the Forging the Future is designed specifically to assist artists—or work creators—and users in the migration of their work from an expired media format (contrast with the Lost Formats Preservation Society) to a new format. Forging the Future is an alliance of Still Water (a new media program at the University of Maine at Orono), UC-Berkeley’s Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Rhizome.org, Franklin Furnace, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the New Langton Arts.
  - b. Their “Tools” section is especially useful for working with older media and developing systems for working with newer media (and migrating from older to newer with the VMQ).
3. Library of Congress
  - a. The Library of Congress maintains a website dedicated to the sustainability of digital formats, largely for planning purposes of the LoC collections.<sup>10</sup> It is a work in progress and is intended to support strategic planning to ensure long-term preservation of digital content, especially from a technical standpoint.
  - b. The site also provides an index to various papers and presentations related to the issues of digital formats.<sup>11</sup>
4. The National Library of Australia: the PADI Initiative<sup>12</sup>
  - a. “Preserving Access to Digital Information,” or PADI, is fairly broad in orientation, focusing upon “information” in digital formats, but is also quite international in the makeup of its advisory group.
  - b. Their website should be seen as a “subject gateway” for digital preservation resources.
5. The Merce Cunningham Dance Company
  - a. As part of the “Legacy Plan” (<http://www.merce.org/p/documents/CDFLegacyPlanPressRelease.pdf>), the Company is developing methods for preserving dance works for posterity.
  - b. “Dance Capsules” are the actual “digital packages” of the creative elements that comprise the choreographic works.<sup>13</sup> This is a fairly young project, but is important for applying digital technology to time-based physical performance work.
6. Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
  - a. Already mentioned above as one of the Forging the Future alliance, their “Archiving the Avant-Garde” project focuses on digital, Internet, performance, installation, conceptual, and “other variable media” art.<sup>14</sup> Both documentation and preservation are of primary concern.
  - b. They have a number of partners who do deal with analog art.
  - c. Of additional interest is Richard Rineheart’s “Archiving the Avant Garde: Documenting and Preserving Variable Media Art” from 2002.<sup>15</sup>
7. Project CAiRO<sup>16</sup>
  - a. This was a 12-month project of the partnership between JISC Digital Media,<sup>17</sup> the Digital Curation Centre,<sup>18</sup> and the University of Bristol Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.docam.ca/en/documentation-model.html> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>8</sup> <http://forging-the-future.net/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>9</sup> <http://variablemediaquestionnaire.net/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats/index.shtml> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats/intro/papers.shtml> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>12</sup> <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10691/20110824-1153/www.nla.gov.au/padi/index.html> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.merce.org/p/dance-capsules.php> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/about/avantgarde> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/may02/05inbrief.html#RINEHART> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.projectcairo.org/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/> (Accessed October, 2011)

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- b. Their focus was on the collection and organization of artistic research output of UK performance and visual arts departments.
- c. The materials were organized in to post-graduate learning and teaching modules to be made freely available under Creative Commons licensing.
8. CASPAR: The CYCLOPS Project<sup>20</sup>
  - a. CASPAR (Cultural, Artistic and Scientific knowledge for Preservation, Access and Retrieval) was begun in 2006 with the mission to “research, implement, and disseminate innovative solutions for digital preservation based on the OAIS reference model (ISO:14721:2003).”<sup>21</sup> The CYCLOPS project is a software tool designed to facilitate the preservation of a body of digital work
  - b. Specifically, CYCLOPS is used
    - i. “to manage an archive for every work
    - ii. to organise inside the archive all the gathered information about a work thanks to a graphical representation
    - iii. to make this organization according to a specific graphical structure and to a specific terminology mixing elements, relations and types
    - iv. to manage templates of archives
    - v. to customize the graphical structure and the specific terminology”<sup>22</sup>
9. The V2\_Organisation: “Capturing Unstable Media” Project
  - a. From March to December 2003, a team from the V2\_Organisation conducted the “Capturing Unstable Media” project, researching “the documentation aspects of the preservation of electronic art activities -- or Capturing Unstable Media --, an approach between archiving and preservation.”
  - b. Their approach was to examine two case studies; the case study of particular interest, “whisper,” is described as a new media piece incorporating an installation space, wearable devices and handheld technologies.<sup>23</sup>
10. Rhizome.org
  - a. In early August, 2011, a paper by Ben Fino-Radin synthesizing the cumulative research and preservation practices of Rhizome.org and other institutions, entitled “Digital Preservation Practices and the Rhizome

Artbase” was published and made available for download.<sup>24</sup>

### “... the street finds its own uses for things”—“Burning Chrome”—William Gibson

The emergence of virtual, augmented, and mixed realities art is forcing an evolution in the models for documentation and preservation of works. Among the most common of the virtual reality environments, Second Life has proven especially problematic in terms of documentation and preservation.

Because Second Life can be considered as a “virtual world” it was deemed of interest to the researchers of the “Preserving Virtual Worlds” grant-funded project.<sup>25</sup> The focus was on both games and virtual worlds, but Second Life proved problematic. In September, 2010, at the end of the first phase of the project, a report was issued entitled “Preserving Virtual Worlds Final Report.”<sup>26</sup> The report detailed the approaches taken by the research group in documenting their processes of preserving the content of the various environments.

The failure of their approach is emblematic of what some of the newer manifestations of “new media” will present to future documentarians and other stewards of digital cultural heritage. The PVW group conceded complete defeat in their efforts with Second Life, devoting the entirety of the seventh chapter of their report to this:

#### 7. When Strategies Fail: The Case of Second Life —

In short, our experiments in trying to archive islands in Second Life at best resulted in extremely partial and static representations of the original. While the techniques we’ve developed may be useful in archiving some virtual world systems, at least in the case of commercial environments such as Second Life, there are severe limits to the preservation activity in which a third party can engage. Given the intellectual property and contractual restrictions governing Second Life, any hope for a complete archive of a Second Life world would rest on Linden Lab’s willingness to archive the content itself.<sup>27</sup>

An example of the complexity that Second Life allows the artist to create can be seen in the documentation of a single performance by a virtual reality/mixed reality performance group called the “Avatar Orchestra Metaverse.”<sup>28</sup> This group is an

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/drama/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>20</sup> <http://ercim-news.ercim.eu/en80/special/cyclops-an-interface-for-producing-and-accessing-archives-of-artistic-works> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.casparpreserves.eu/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.utc.fr/caspar/wiki/pmwiki.php?n=Main.Proto> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.v2.nl/lab/projects/whisper/body-as-system> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>24</sup> <http://media.rhizome.org/blog/8332/rhizome-digital-preservation-practices.pdf> (direct link to PDF file; accessed October, 2011)

<sup>25</sup> <http://pvw.illinois.edu/pvw/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>26</sup> <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/17097> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>27</sup> IBID

<sup>28</sup> <http://avatarorchestra.blogspot.com/> (Accessed October, 2011)

international ensemble of musicians, visual artists and developers who have created musical instruments that exist solely within Second Life and can only be played there. In September, 2010, they premiered a performance of a piece called “Rotating Brains/Beating Hearts,” described as a “mixed reality performance.” The actual performance took place, quite literally, across Europe, Asia, North America, and Australia, as well as Second Life. Live musicians were working with both avatars and other live musicians through both realities. Portions of the music were being produced solely within Second Life and streaming in to a performance space in the UK, where a group of musicians were streaming live music into Second Life.

And there are other “realities” proliferating. The growth of “apps” for smartphones has created an opportunity for artists to begin experimenting in a multitude of ways. The “Virtual Public Art Project”<sup>29</sup> is another worldwide initiative, with manifestations scattered across the globe.<sup>30</sup> The installations require the use of a smartphone to experience the artists’ works.

A similar approach using augmented reality has been taken by the Public Ad Campaign in their “takeover” of Times Square.<sup>31</sup> By pointing a smartphone or tablet towards certain billboards in Times Square, virtual artworks replaced the billboard content.

Finally, the musical group Bluebrain has taken advantage of the locative capabilities of the iPhone in particular and have released two “location aware” albums. The first, “The National Mall” requires the users to load the music on their iPhone and walk around the National Mall in Washington, DC.”<sup>32</sup> From their website:

“The National Mall” works by tracking a users location via the iPhones built-in GPS capabilities. Hundreds of zones within the Mall are tagged and alter the sound based on where the listener is located in proximity to them. Zones overlap and interact in dynamic ways that, while far from random, will yield a unique experience with each listen. The proprietary design that is the engine behind the app will stay hidden from view as the melodies, rhythms, instrumentation and pace of the music vary based on the listeners’ chosen path. ‘The National Mall’ is an ambitious project that will allow users to listen to and interact with a work of music in a way that’s never been possible before.

Their second location-aware effort, “Central Park (Listen to the Light)” uses the same approach, but designed for New York City’s Central Park.

### “Onward through the fog...”

One hopes that a trend can be seen — that the documentation of our creative endeavors in the digital realm is being aggressively pursued and that the stewards of cultural heritage are embracing this inevitable direction. The proliferation of conferences and projects supporting the need for such documentation is ample evidence of this growth area. Gallery owners, special collections librarians, archivists, and museum workers all will increasingly find these new formats in their collections and through sharing of resources such as these cited above, continue to care for their wards.

<sup>29</sup> [http://virtualpublicartproject.com/Virtual\\_Public\\_Art\\_Project/Virtual\\_Public\\_Art\\_Project.html](http://virtualpublicartproject.com/Virtual_Public_Art_Project/Virtual_Public_Art_Project.html) (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>30</sup> [http://virtualpublicartproject.com/Virtual\\_Public\\_Art\\_Project/Locations.html](http://virtualpublicartproject.com/Virtual_Public_Art_Project/Locations.html) (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>31</sup> <http://gajitz.com/times-square-ads-overtaken-with-augmented-reality-art/> (Accessed October, 2011)

<sup>32</sup> <http://bluebrainmusic.blogspot.com/2011/03/national-mall.html> (Accessed October, 2011)