

Obtuse, Flitting by, and Nevertheless There
– Image Archives in Practice

by

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I hereby declare that the following work is my own.

Ines Schaber. Berlin, August 2011

Abstract

Over the past thirty years, the status of the archive as well as the state of what we call “documentary” have dominated discussions in and around photography. Although it is now commonplace to presume the objectifying gesture of documentary photography, the complex question of how, as a working artist/photographer, to approach the archive has not yet been adequately addressed. The purpose of this research is to raise questions about how, after the critique of the documentary image, the artist/photographer addresses, indeed, finds the archive. I am starting with the assumption that the archive is not only a place of storage but also a place of production, where our relation to the past is materialised and where our present writes itself into the future; thus, accordingly, I understand the archive as a place of negotiation and writing.

After the problems of the archive have been identified theoretically, the practice in the archive still encounters challenges and contradictions. This project explores those difficulties that remain within the practice in and around the archive, even after the critique has been stated. It is not about simply extending the critique, but finding an archive and the practice with it.

I am approaching these questions as a practitioner. As an artist and photographer, I am concerned with two practices in relation to archives: working with existing archives, and making work that will itself be archived. The point raised by those two activities is not to find or create another institutional archive per se, but to develop an archival practice in which the set of problems that the archives produce is in fact part of the process one engages in. Hence the work is a theoretical and practical set of experiments that may never be complete and conclusive.

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Preface

Over the past thirty years, the status of the archive as well as the state of what we call “documentary” have dominated discussions in and around photography. In art theory and criticism as well as in statements and texts written by artists, these discussions have focused on questioning documentary photography’s realist assumptions. These challenges to the status of the photograph as empirical proof and historical legitimation have fundamentally changed our understanding of photography and the role of the photographic archive. While today we take for granted that images do not in any simple way tell the truth, the often-made inverse statement that they “lie” is just as mystifying. Visual “facts” are subject to interrogation not only for the sake of questioning the truth of what is depicted, but also with respect to the story or context to which the photograph alludes. Thus any critique of the documentary mode requires at once an urgency of practice and an engagement with the genre as a discourse, of which the archive is a part.

Although it is now commonplace to presume the objectifying gesture of documentary photography, the complex question of how, as a working artist/photographer, to approach the archive has not yet been adequately addressed. The purpose of this research is to raise questions about how, after the critique of the documentary image, the photographer/artist approaches and addresses, indeed, finds the archive? I am starting with the assumption that the archive is not only a place of storage but also a place of production, where our relation to the past is materialised and where our present writes itself into the future; thus, accordingly, I understand the archive as a place of negotiation and writing.

I am approaching these questions as a practitioner, a person who makes photographs and works with them. As an artist and photographer, I am concerned with two practices in relation to archives: working with existing archives, and making work that will itself be archived, which entails finding an archive “into” which one will produce a work. The point raised by those two activities is not to find or create another institutional archive per se, but to develop an archival practice in which the set of problems that the archives produce is in fact part of the process one works with.

The discourses around both the documentary image and the archive are often detached from one another. By contrast, the assumption of this research is that they cannot be separated; for the same way the image can no longer be discussed or thought today without considering its forms of production, distribution, and collection, archives can no longer be thought without considering the discourses around the documentary image—as they condition the reading of photography itself. Here the archive is one of the places that acts upon the photographic image, makes it speak, makes it readable and locatable. In this respect, I understand the archive as a form of production surrounding the medium of photography, a form that influences images through collection, ordering, categorising, and accessibility. One reason why the archive has been discussed and so seriously challenged in the last years rests on the reorganisation of image archives into digital data banks, which has influenced the reading and evaluation of, and access to, our visual past. The decision to favour the archive as opposed to other forms of distribution and publication (such as the art space, journalism, or amateur photography) is based on a series of discursive possibilities that the archive offers. On the one hand, the archive is a longer-term project and is not necessarily directly interested in a “result,” a presentation, or a representation. On the other hand, potentially differing fields of photography, which otherwise usually operate separately, overlap in the archive.¹ In addition the archive is a place that is focused on making images available rather than producing their uses and applications. In this sense I consider the archive as a place of potentials.

In the following, questions of the image itself inevitably surface time and again; these questions overlap with others that surround the archive, questions without which the archive cannot be conceived. That images neither tell the truth nor lie means first and foremost that we must accept the need for a practice with images and an engagement with the genre in order to unfold the space that exists beyond truth or lies. To make use of the archive as a discursive entity, as part of the thinking around the medium, and as an articulation of the practice it involves is one possible approach which would acknowledge the various steps that are part of the production of photographic meaning.

¹ The critique of this assumption holds that the archive also has a homogenising effect on images. This aspect will be discussed in Cabinet 3: Introduction.

By archive, I do not merely mean to refer to institutional archives or collections, or to artists working in or on archives, but to the *praxis of and in the archive*. I translate the German term *Handlung* into “praxis,” which is complicated and imprecise; but the difficulty also helps specify what I mean by *die Handlungen im Archiv*: it describes specific acts of doing something in the archive, acts that refer to something more complex than the work itself. One could translate the expression into “what ones does in the archive,” the “activity one conducts in the archive,” or “the doings or actions in the archive.” I am drawing on Hannah Arendt’s notion of *Handlung* in *Vita Activa*, where she describes the term in opposition to work and labour, as an act that is in unity with language and only possible in a social context.² Although Arendt herself translates the German word *Handlung* into “action,” I prefer using the term practice, or praxis. Praxis has a complicated Greek (Aristotelian) genealogy because only free men could engage in it, but it has come to mean the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted or practiced. Aristotle held that there were three activities of man: theory, poiesis, and praxis. For him, three figures of knowledge corresponded to these three activities: theoretical knowledge, of which the ultimate goal was truth; poietical knowledge, of which the ultimate goal was production; and practical knowledge, of which the ultimate goal was action. He subdivided practical knowledge into ethics, economics, and politics. According to Aristotle, common to all poiesis is the showing of actions (*die Darstellung der Handlung*), and the enacting of practices (*Handlungen*) that are not necessarily “real,” even though they may show what “could be” or “is possible.” The Marxist, especially the Lukácsian, interpretation offers the notion of mediation as an activity that is a political practice precisely because it links theory with practice.³ In the following I will use the term (*archival*) practice or praxis, for this seems to be the most appropriate translation.

² See Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa oder vom tätigen Leben* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 2002). On page 234 Arendt writes, “*Handeln, im Unterschied zum Herstellen, ist in Isoliertheit niemals möglich; jede Isoliertheit, ob gewollt oder ungewollt, beraubt der Fähigkeit zu handeln. So wie das Herstellen der Umgebung der Natur bedarf, die es mit Material versorgt, und einer Umwelt, in der das Fertigfabrikat zur Geltung kommen kann, so bedarf das Handeln und Sprechen der Mitwelt, an die es sich richtet. Das Herstellen vollzieht sich in und für die Welt, mit deren dinglichem Bestand es in ständigem Kontakt bleibt; das Handeln und Sprechen vollzieht sich in dem Bezugsgewebe zwischen den Menschen, das seinerseits aus Gehandeltem und Gesprochenem entstanden ist, und muß in ihm in ständigem Kontakt bleiben.*”

³ Lukács states that the task of political organisation is to establish professional discipline within everyday political praxis and thereby design the form of mediation best suited to clear interactions

ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Historically it was not uncommon for fine art photographers to work for and produce on commission for archives. From the 1920s to the 1940s a variety of artist/photographers produced images for collections, archives, or on commission, e.g. for the Landesbildstelle Berlin (The Photography Collection of the State of Berlin)⁴ or the US Farm Security Administration⁵. In the 1920s avant-garde movements used photography and included it in an experimental way in exhibitions, like the exhibitions of the photo department of the Bauhaus, *The Pressa Exhibition* in Cologne (1928), *Film and Foto* (1929) in Stuttgart, *The Task of the Press is the Education of the Masses* (1928), or the *Building Workers' Union Exhibition* in Berlin (1935). Yet today the division between artistic photography and other uses of photography—scientific, journalistic, commercial—is quite established. This division between diverse applications and uses of photography has haunted the medium since its very beginning. Already in the 1840s the photograph was discussed as if it were the expression of a “soulless” machine, a “pencil of nature,” or a work of art. Although the discussions of how to define a photograph had been legally decided as early as 1882 by the French courts, which ruled that a photograph has an author and is therefore an image which carries an “imprint of personality,”⁶ the various forms of production were still fluid for some time.

The commonplace division between documentary photography, broadly speaking, and fine art photography is perhaps nowhere better evidenced than by the routine exhibition practice of the photo department, which opened in 1940, of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The case of MoMA has often been described as the decisive institutional practice that established the division between the various fields of practices. As art historian Mary Anne Staniszewski notes, “Since 1970, the photo department’s installation methods, with rare exceptions, have consistently worked to establish exclusively formalist and aestheticized conventions—and

between theory and practice. See Judith Marcus and Zoltan Tarr, *Georg Lukács: Theory, Culture, and Politics* (New Jersey: Transaction, 1989).

⁴ The Landesbildstelle commissioned images by artist/photographers, in particular in the 1920s.

⁵ A program initiated by the US government as part of the New Deal, the FSA employed photographers to document rural areas in the USA in the 1930s. See: Cabinet 2: Introduction.

⁶ See Cabinet 2: Introduction.

appreciation of the medium—within the museum.”⁷ Yet already decades earlier, especially in exhibitions curated by Edward Steichen⁸ and John Szarkowski,⁹ MoMA produced a shift in the understanding of photography. Steichen introduced his position on a MoMA panel in 1950, stating that “photography is an important and powerful factor in the formation and enrichment of our understanding of the present. I think photography’s influence cannot be overemphasized. I particularly want to attach importance to the significance of photography as art, as a lively, modern medium that is able to turn ideas into form.”¹⁰ By contrast John Szarkowski described the essence of photography in the decades after the war as having moved from an interest in public matters to private matters. Both positions can be read as part of a cultural shift within the specific political situation in the United States after World War II. The inwardness, the caring for abstract photography, themes of nature, and private symbolism, all embedded in the new role of the artist/photographer, were an expression of the restorative political situation, not to mention a response to the threats of McCarthyism. Thus MoMA’s exhibitions and the discourse surrounding them offer a trenchant example of the pendulum swing from social documentary’s peak during the Great Depression to its vilification during the Cold War, the result being the establishment of photography as an artistic medium.

The institutional practice of MoMA’s photo department can therefore only be described as one actor in this larger frame where the medium’s use, application, and discourse took place. This process was enabled not only by the institution that established the aforementioned shift in the understanding of the medium, but also by the photographers or artists who accepted it and by the characteristics of the medium itself. Allan Sekula, who has often taken MoMA’s exhibition practice as a starting point for his reflections on photography,¹¹ describes these characteristics as having

⁷ Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 27.

⁸ Edward Steichen (1879-1973) was a photographer and curator. After World War II he was the director of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York until 1962. In 1955, while at MoMA, he curated and assembled the exhibit *The Family of Man*. In 1962 Steichen hired John Szarkowski to be his successor at the Museum of Modern Art.

⁹ John Szarkowski (1925-2007) was a photographer, curator, historian, and critic. He was the director of the photography department at MoMA from 1962 to 1991.

¹⁰ Quoted in Wolfgang Kemp, *Theorie der Fotografie III. 1945-1980* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel), 69 (translation mine).

¹¹ See, for example, Allan Sekula, “The instrumental Image: Steichen at War,” in *Artforum*, 13 (1975); reprinted in Allan Sekula, *Photography against the Grain*, (Halifax: Nova Scotia Press, 1989); and Allan Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” *Art Journal*, 41 (1981): 15–25.

been embedded in the invention of photography from its founding moment on. It is worth quoting him at length:

Photography is haunted by two chattering ghosts: that of bourgeois science and that of bourgeois art. The first goes on about the truth of appearances, about the world reduced to a positive ensemble of facts, to a constellation of knowable and possessable objects. The second spectre has the historical mission of apologizing for and redeeming the atrocities committed by the subservient—and more than spectral—hand of science. This second spectre offers us a reconstructed subject in the luminous person of the artist. Thus, from 1839 onward, affirmative commentaries on photography have engaged in a comic, shuffling dance between technological determinism and auteurism, between machine and a belief in the subjective, imaginative capabilities of the artist. In persistently arguing for the harmonious coexistence of optical truths and visual pleasures, in yoking a positivist scientism with a romantic metaphysics, photographic discourse has attempted to bridge the philosophical and institutional separation of scientific and artistic practices that has characterized bourgeois society since the late eighteenth century. . . . This philosophical shell game is evidence of a sustained crisis at the very centre of bourgeois culture, a crisis rooted in the emergence of science and technology as seemingly autonomous productive forces. Bourgeois culture has had to contend with the threat and the promise of the machine, which it continues both to resist and embrace.¹²

For Sekula, the bourgeois applications of photography as a medium of science and art—a medium that proves the “truth of appearances” and “apologizes” for it through “a belief in the subjective, imaginative capabilities of the artist”—have existed since photography’s very foundation. Yet even though institutions played a decisive role in shifting the understanding of the medium of photography, and even though the medium had played such an instrumental role within bourgeois culture from its beginning, one cannot say that these applications became omnipresent. To remember and to enhance other practices and attempts that were and are active around the medium is, among other things, the subject of this thesis; for I feel that any treatment of artistic photography as a purely aesthetic medium is just as limited as any division between photography and fine art photography according to place of publication. Finally, in my dissertation I read this division as a limit to *praxis*, and I try to propose and trace other conceptions.

¹² Allan Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” *Art Journal*, 41 (1981): 15.

Although very few contemporary artists today work in both fields,¹³ the archive is a place where the apparent objectivities and subjectivities could potentially meet, even though the archive itself and the archiving process often continue to constitute a blind spot. Generally speaking, the archive is considered either a working archive of an individual or a storage place of general interest. Artists or practitioners who work with images in a more complex way often consider the archive a subject of their work but rarely consider it a place of production. Artists produce work in and from their individual working archives but tend to refuse to produce for more general archives. To retain control over their own production, artists and other practitioners seldom allow their images to become part of another system of making images, reading them, accessing them, commenting on them, and distributing them. Questions are raised and works are done that are *about* the archive, its rules, and its forms of organisation; to work *for* an archive, however, would necessarily mean to confront the rules that an archive poses and also negotiate or even give up some of the control one has over one's own work. As we'll see, to understand an archival practice as a more complicated process, would, on the other hand, as well demand from the archives and its holders that they in turn would give up their generalizing rules.

ARCHIVAL DISCOURSES

In speaking of the archive, one generally differentiates between, on the one side, the historical and material practices of specific archives and, on the other side, the concept (or ontology) of the archive in general—that is, the abstract order of archiving, classifying, documenting, researching, seeking, and finding. The various approaches and discourses that are attached to the archive are so multifarious that it is often hard to connect them to one another. This is particularly true when attempting to link the discourses around the archive as an institution with other forms of archiving, which will be discussed below. While general archives have been

¹³ Exceptions include Walid Raad for The Atlas Group and for the Arab Image Foundation, and Michal Heiman and Miki Kratsman for the Archive of the Umm el-Fahem Gallery, all of whom will be discussed in *Cabinet 4: Essay*, as well as work by Tom Nicholson (See: Chapter 3: Introduction) and Joel Mützenberg.

maintained since antiquity, the modern conception of the archive and its administration was developed in revolutionary France upon the founding of the National Archives in 1789 and the Archives Department in 1796. Similarly in England the Public Record Act of 1838 legislated and outlined the management of all public repositories.¹⁴ The development, proliferation, and institutionalisation of archives are thus generally associated with nineteenth-century Europe. In these forms, the archive (and especially the national archive) reflected the historical positivism typical of the era. For contemporary theorists the archive has become a physical site of this kind of practice and a symbol of this philosophy.

The most influential philosophical and historical reflections on the archive—as an institution that shapes discourses while exercising power and being led by an authority—are found in Michel Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge*¹⁵ and Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever*.¹⁶ For Foucault the archive is not merely the sum of all historical documentation produced by a culture, nor is it the institution that stores texts; rather it is a theoretical twin of his conception of a “discursive formation.” Whereas his notion of the archive is almost completely detached from the physical repository itself and the practice of institutional archiving, it is nonetheless fruitful for the work in the archive. A centre for the production of meaning, to him the archive is the “law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events.”¹⁷ Foucault’s archive reminds us that the storage, organisation, and redistribution of information are never passive or innocent; they always inform political and historical discourse. Derrida, on the other hand, who produced his text on the occasion of a lecture at Freud’s house in London, develops his notion of the archive as a “scene of domiciliation”: it gives shelter, it assigns to residence, and it consigns as it gathers together signs. The archive is at once “*institutive* and *conservative* It has the force of law, of a law which is the law of the house.”¹⁸ Exploring the Greek roots of the term, which stands for both “commencement” and “commandment,” Derrida relates the archive to an *authority*,

¹⁴ See Linda Ferreira-Buckley, “Archivists with an Attitude: Rescuing the Archives from Foucault,” *College English*, 61 (1999).

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Foucault, 145.

¹⁸ Derrida, 7.

which is just as much in question as an *origin*. Archiving represents both an attempt at preserving something to be remembered and the leaving out of something to be forgotten. Just like any act produces, at least virtually, an archive for itself, any act that was not carried out also leaves traces in the unconscious. This unconscious then produces the problematic field of a “virtual archive” that contains all acts, the ones that took place and the ones that did not. Therefore Derrida proposes to get rid of the term “archive” altogether and restructure it. Such a restructuring would then inevitably eliminate the separation between *actus* and *potentia*. This process of archivization would enact as much the production as it would the recording of an event; it would open up “the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.”¹⁹

Whereas Foucault and Derrida are concerned with an archival discourse in general, the institutional creation and implementation of the *image* archive is more complicated to determine. Allan Sekula sees the archive’s emergence in the police records and systems developed by Bertillon and Galton in nineteenth-century Europe.²⁰ He notes that an emergent bibliographic science provided the utopian model of classification amidst expansive and unruly collections of photographs. At a variety of separate but related congresses on the internationalisation and standardisation of photographic and bibliographic methods, held between 1895 and 1910, it was recommended that photographs be catalogued topically according to the decimal system invented in 1876 by the American librarian and educator Melvil Dewey. As Sekula writes, the lingering prestige of optical empiricism was “sufficiently strong to ensure that the terrain of the photographable was still regarded as roughly congruent with that of knowledge in general. The Institute for International Bibliography built on the universalist logic of the eighteenth-century encyclopedists. But appropriate to the triumphal years of an epoch of scientific positivism and the early years of bureaucratic rationalization, a grandiose clerical mentality had now taken hold.”²¹ Thus, the answer to the question of why image archives rarely produced a discourse by their own means stems from the fact that their founding was determined by the logic and the rules of the archive in general.

¹⁹ Ibid., 36.

²⁰ See Cabinet 3 and 4: Introduction.

²¹ Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October*, 39 (Winter, 1986): 56–57.

Whereas an image is a very specific form of document—because it is a fragmentary entity enveloped by other forms of reference (like text, authorship, place, context, or conditions of production)—the logic of the archive has also ruled the practices around the institutional image archive from the very beginning.

Sekula argues that image archives have promised a modern enhanced mastery of nature, which is shown by their origins in policing. He writes, “Every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police,”²² and thereby raises a fundamental critique of the archive as a universal system of classification that strives to incorporate everything in existence. In his view, archival projects typically manifest a compulsive desire for completeness, a faith in an ultimate coherence imposed by the sheer quantity of acquisitions. Furthermore, the classification system of the archive treats images as atomised entities, deprives them of any context, and thus establishes a relation of abstract visual equivalences between them. Classification in the archive produces an order of images by bureaucratic means, governed by the rule of an ownership that serves power interests and is specifically connected to the elite’s need to manage and promote their own histories as well as police those who might challenge that order.²³

Alain Resnais attempted to portray the institutional problematic of the archive in his essay film *Toute la memoire du monde*, which follows a book on its way into the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris. The film tracks the various actions of classification that the book undergoes in its movement into the library’s system. Resnais pictures the library as a forbiddingly inhuman place. Only in the act of individual selection—a single person choosing a specific text in the reading room—is there hope that the undifferentiated mass of knowledge can be unleashed, because the reader makes discriminating use of the collective national memory for the fulfillment of a constructive individual purpose. As the narrator notes, the book is redeemed “from an abstract, universal, indifferent memory” through an act of individual selection, while the library remains represented as a demonic machine that swallows the arriving books.²⁴

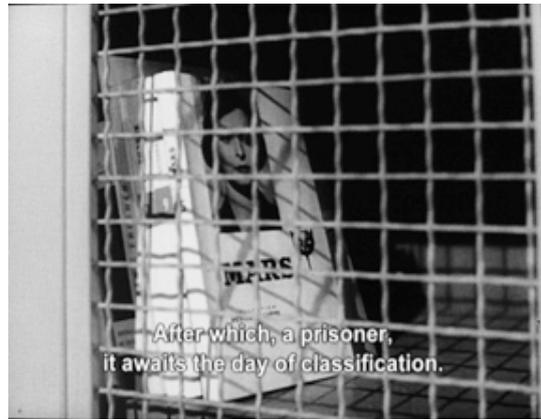
²² Ibid., 7.

²³ See Cabinet 3: Introduction.

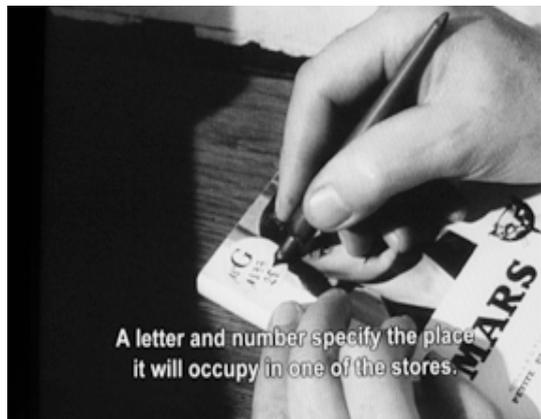
²⁴ Alain Resnais, *Toute la Mémoire du monde*, France (1956), 35mm Film, 21 minutes.



everything must be kept.
That's the rule.



After which, a prisoner,
it awaits the day of classification.



A letter and number specify the place
it will occupy in one of the stores.



Astrophysics, physiology, theology
taxenomy, philology, cosmology



Stills from *Toute la Mémoire du monde* by Alain Resnais.

Whereas in Resnais' film the redemption of the abstract machine of the library is effected by its users, Sekula concludes his analysis of the history of the image archive differently. He warns us that the mechanisms of early archives continue to impose general definitions on uses of photography: "What should be recognized . . . is that [even] photographic books (and exhibitions), frequently cannot help but reproduce these rudimentary ordering schemes [of the archive], and in so doing implicitly share in both [its] authority and [its] illusory neutrality."²⁵

Different than Sekula's analysis, which maintains doubts regarding the possibility of a different archive, other arguments acknowledge that another form of politics also depends on another form of archiving. To my mind, the institutional critiques of the archive also need to formulate or offer another form of practice within it. One contemporary example of a practice that takes seriously the writing of another history through creating another form of archive is the work of the

²⁵ Allan Sekula, "Photography between labour and capital," in *Mining Photographs and other Pictures 1948–1968* (Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983), 197–198; See also Cabinet 4: Introduction.

Argentinian collective *Tucumán Arde*. Their archive (and the way they make their archive visible and active in exhibitions and presentations) carries traces of a recent past that belonged to the collective works of artists, who were themselves susceptible to repressive and dictatorial regimes. According to Garciela Carnevale, the documents are in many cases the only available evidence of experiences long hidden and ignored. Today these documents have become a unique reference because other sources were dispersed, burnt, stigmatized, or made invisible. Here the archive constitutes itself as a place of politico-artistic experience in collective work and in personal and affective motives, which enable preservation of the former.²⁶



Inventario 1965-1975, Archivo Garciela Carnevale, Centro Cultural de España, Rosario, Argentina, October 2008.

In order both to evaluate the possibilities of making their documents available and to carefully consider the context in which their work appears, *Tucumán Arde*

²⁶ See Garciela Carnevale, “Das Archiv denken. Das argentinische Kollektiv Tucumán Arde aus der Sicht einer Beteiligten,” in *Springerin*, 17 (2011): 56–59.

must needs create another form of archive. The public presentations are different each time, and the collective does not accept just any invitation. The organisation and exhibition of the archive is understood as a construction, as a question of editing and montage. The compromise achieved in the presentations and exhibitions has to do with not only the past, but also the necessity of reflecting upon contemporary practices and politics.

QUESTION OF PRACTICE

The archive and the work of the collective *Tucumán Arde* is an instance of a politico-artistic articulation that understands processes of making and the reflecting upon history as part of their production. I assume that a critical discourse of the archive in general is now well known and established, that the discourse around image archives is recognised in the fields of art history and archival sciences, and that the praxis of archives and in archives is specifically challenged by many artists and their work. However, what is missing or still to be accomplished is the articulation of a *possible other archival practice* around photography. The question of how to trace the acts that constitute an archive and how to develop a potential *possible praxis* (*Handlungsmöglichkeiten*) are still dilemmas or working problems that contemporary practitioners are faced with.

Practitioners still lack the formulation or articulation of an available and complex archival practice that implements the theoretically posed problems or the artistically identified propositions. Fundamental questions concerning and affecting practitioners remain unanswered: Where is the archive *into* which the working artist can and wants to produce? How can repeatedly re/worked and re/proposed photographic practices—which treat the single image as part of a complex relationship between image and other agents in the photographic process (photographer, photographed subject, viewer, language)—enter the archive? What would an archive look like that does not sort and organize material according to pre-set rules but tries to come up with more complex expectations or even generate self-activity? How could this sort of complex understanding of the archive be created, organised, and used?

My hypothesis is that fragments of the answers to these questions exist among the works and writings of photographers, artists, and critics. What seems to be missing, however, is a greater synthesis, which this dissertation attempts to provide by naming the individual components of what I'm calling an archival practice, formulating these components as questions, testing them, and seeing what alternative forms of archival processes emerge from this experimentation and iteration. In this sense this project responds to important efforts by theoreticians, photographers, and artists to establish rules of photographic engagement that reflect the institutional and epistemological critiques now taken for granted. Those rules, however, have in practice often proven cumbersome, obstructionist, or even wrong. Art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau, for example, states that the renewal of documentary photography is not predicated only on "a full awareness of the role played by context, subject/object relations, and the various structuring mechanisms that determine photographic meaning." Rethinking documentary in a rigorous and serious way also "includes an insistence on maintaining control over the work in terms of exhibition, publication, or distribution."²⁷ To maintain control might sometimes be necessary in order to insist on a position, protect a person pictured, or maintain a more complex nexus of relationships around a photograph. But control is not always the only means by which photography is "renewed." Rereading, reusing, activating, or actively interpreting images are, in my view, modes that need to become integral parts of processes of viewing, making, and showing; and these processes have to be occupied by many agents, rather than by just one author who is in control of his or her image.²⁸ As a contrast, Visual Culture theorist and curator Ariella Azoulay states that "ownership is ontologically foreign to photography." Yet although her analysis might be important in relation to the history of photography, it is of little help to contemporary practitioners. For, the rules of ownership and copyright are not only part of production processes (that otherwise might not even take place), they have also established themselves in the writing of the medium's history and its perception.²⁹

²⁷ Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Who is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography," in Solomon Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 183.

²⁸ See Cabinet 1: Essay.

²⁹ See Cabinet 2: Introduction.

I will try to show the danger in imposing discourses onto a practice or essentializing a theoretical or historical analysis. What often tends to be forgotten are the complex relations that constitute a significant portion of the diverse moments of praxis in the photographic process. Instead of calling upon rules and generalisations, another process would have recourse to a more complex understanding of photographic practice—I am calling it archival practice. To deal with all images in the same way or to sort all photographic processes according to the same pattern not only produces a simplification, but also excludes images that do not fit. What doesn't fit into the given structure is excluded from appearance; it cannot enter, or requires modification in order to fit in, often to the point of defacement. The problem of the absence of processes, histories, and images consequently becomes not only a question of political exclusion and the structuring of the archive, as Foucault and others have shown. It also becomes a question of production, since images that cannot enter the archive might not even be made in the first place.

THEORY, PRAXIS, and the PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGES

This project does not attempt to draw a line between theory and practice, nor does it strive to reverse the frequent hierarchization of the two. Instead, through its handling of the question of practice, it recognises that the challenge lies in opening up a field where diverse approaches, proposals, thoughts, and experiments can be brought into relation with one another. In recent years, established methods in a variety of academic fields have become objects of criticism. Instead of arising in a place located outside of their respective fields, however, these critiques were often articulated from within, appearing precisely when a field was unable to answer or approach certain questions by means of its own available and acknowledged tools and methods. Ernesto Laclau, for instance, states:

While we spent years trying to detect the real prejudices hidden behind the appearance of objective statements, do we have now to reveal the real objective and incontrovertible facts hidden behind the illusion of prejudices? . . . Was I wrong to participate in the invention of this field known as science studies? Is it enough to say that we did not really mean what we meant? Why does it burn

my tongue to say that global warming is a fact whether you like it or not? Why can't I simply say that the argument is closed for good?³⁰

Avery Gordon also struggles with the limits of her field—by being haunted. The ghost is not a recognised object of study in sociology; however, it might be the very term and the very condition that enables a reading of the limits experienced by the methods and the vocabularies that are acknowledged in Gordon's field:

The persistent and troubling ghosts in the house highlighted the limitations of many of our prevalent modes of inquiry and the assumptions they make about the social world, the people who inhabit these worlds, and what is required to study them. The available critical vocabularies were failing (me) to communicate the depth, density, and intricacies of the dialectic of subjection and subjectivity (or what in my business we call structure and agency), of domination and freedom, of critique and utopian longing. Of course, it is not simply the vocabularies themselves that are at fault, but the constellation of effects, historical and institutional, that make a vocabulary a social practice of producing knowledge. A vocabulary and a practice were missing while demanding their due.³¹

For decades, problems like these were tackled through interdisciplinarity. Roland Barthes, who uses the term with an expansiveness uncommon to its institutional practice, states that “interdisciplinary work . . . is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a “subject” (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one.”³² Extending on Barthes' description of the interdisciplinary, I propose the terms *beyond-disciplinarity*, *de-disciplinarity*, or even *undisciplined studies* and thereby strive to demonstrate that in order to meet the “dues demanded,” a “new object” needs other (open) spaces and other (new) languages, as well as an openness to areas beyond or outside the established methods of a particular field. To allow these methods, new and old, to talk to one another, one must begin to unlearn limits, or go beyond them. One must expand notions of

³⁰ See <<http://rs.resalliance.org/2007/02/25/latour-rethinks-the-social-construction-of-science/>>. Accessed February 5, 2011.

³¹ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

³² Quoted in Gordon, 7.

knowledge and open oneself to other forms of knowledge, enlarge the vocabulary and method applied in each field and indeed invent new vocabularies.³³

Another writer who has expanded the vocabularies and methodologies beyond the limits of his field is anthropologist Michael Taussig. Expanding our understanding of what knowing could be, Taussig introduces other forms of knowledge, one of which he calls *social knowledge*.³⁴ Social knowledge is “acquired through practices rather than through conscious learning, like one’s native tongue . . . [it] can be thought of as one of the dominant faculties of what it takes to be a social being.”³⁵ For Taussig social knowledge is not simply a passive, reflecting, absorbing faculty of social existence; it should be thought of as “an experimental activity, essaying this or that possibility, imagining this or that situation, this or that motivation, postulating another dimension to a personality—in short trying out in verbal and visual image the range of possibilities and near-impossibilities of social intercourse, self and other.”³⁶ This “other” form of knowledge also produces another form of “meaning,” which Taussig borrows from Barthes’ text on Sergej Eisenstein’s film stills:

In stressing the implicitness of this knowledge, which is also part of its power in social life, I think we are directed away from the *obvious* to what Roland Barthes called *obtuse* meaning in his analysis of images and their difference from signs. Whereas the obvious meaning in an image is taken from a common stock of symbols and is forced upon one like a code “held in a complete system of destination,” the obtuse meaning seems to Barthes . . . “greater than the pure, upright, secant, legal perpendicular of the narrative, it seems to open the field of meaning totally, that is indefinitely. I even accept for the obtuse meaning the word’s pejorative connotation: the obtuse meaning appears to extend outside culture, knowledge, information”.³⁷

³³ This is particularly true, of course, for the fields of photography and art which I am talking about in this text. The last decade has seen massive discussion regarding how to teach art differently than through studio practice, but research-based or practice-based art PhDs are also confronted with the question of adapting existing methods of writing, or inventing *something else*. This *something else*, however, is only just beginning to be developed and negotiated.

³⁴ Another form of knowledge that Taussig describes is a “*preemptively apocalyptic knowledge*” (emphasis mine) – “a body’s knowing itself as a consequence of planetary crisis and meltdown. It is when the machine begins to break down and you begin to see how it works. Likewise it is when authority is challenged that you begin to see the otherwise concealed workings of the power structure.” See Michael Taussig, *What Color is the Sacred?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 14.

³⁵ Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 393.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 394.

³⁷ Taussig (1987), 366. Taussig discusses and quotes Roland Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 54–55.

It isn't surprising that the image challenges notions of knowledge. Barthes, who later invents other terms to describe photographs,³⁸ takes on the challenge of viewing stills of a film by Eisenstein so as to extend established scientific methods by inventing a new vocabulary for something that exists outside of language: "For if you look at the images I am discussing, you can see this meaning, we can agree on it 'over the shoulder' or 'on the back' of articulated language."³⁹ However, the concepts and descriptions proposed enable that which is outside of language rather than fixing it. The relation between language and non-language (or theory and filmmaking) becomes transversal rather than hierarchical or disjunct. Barthes uses the term *third meaning* to describe a meaning beyond an informational and symbolic level, something he calls *obtuse*—"it is the one 'too many,' the supplement that . . . intellection cannot succeed in absorbing, at once persistent and fleeting, smooth and elusive."⁴⁰

Besides Barthes' term of the obtuse meaning, Taussig has often written as well in relation to the thoughts of Walter Benjamin. Benjamin is a major figure in nearly all texts written on the archive from a cultural perspective. Even though Benjamin never discusses the archive as such, he has enabled a contemporary thinking about it. One reason for this is found in Benjamin's practice of fusing objects and language in a way that Adorno has described as a thinking that "huddles closely against an object, as if it would want to transform itself through touching, smelling, and tasting."⁴¹ Benjamin "translates" objects into words, but keeps the objectness in language to the extent that translation means more than translation and more than explanation. Language becomes something "thing-like," and the words remain things or even acts in themselves.

This is also true for the terms Benjamin originates in his text "On the Concept of History," where he distinguishes between historicism and a material writing of history. The text, and specifically paragraph 17, has been perhaps the most influential for the writing of history in relation to archival practice:

³⁸ See Cabinet 3: Introduction.

³⁹ Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning," in Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 61.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴¹ Theodor Adorno, "Charakteristik Walter Benjamin," in Adorno, *Über Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 251 (my translation).

Historicism justifiably culminates in universal history. Nowhere does the materialist writing of history distance itself from it more clearly than in terms of method. The former has no theoretical armature. Its method is additive: it offers a mass of facts, in order to fill up a homogenous and empty time. The materialist writing of history for its part is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts but also their zero-hour [Stillstellung]. Where thinking suddenly halts in a constellation overflowing with tensions, there it yields a shock to the same, through which it crystallizes as a monad. The historical materialist approaches a historical object solely and alone where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he cognizes the sign of a messianic zero-hour [Stillstellung] of events, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past. He perceives it, in order to explode a specific epoch out of the homogenous course of history; thus exploding a specific life out of the epoch, or a specific work out of the life-work. The net gain of this procedure consists of this: that the life-work is preserved and sublated *in* the work, the epoch *in* the life-work, and the entire course of history *in* the epoch. The nourishing fruit of what is historically conceptualized has time as its core, its precious but flavorless seed.⁴²

“Crystallisations,” “monads,” and a “constructive principle” against the idea of addition—these terms, offered by Benjamin time and again, have also been adopted time and again in anticipation of another form of writing histories. In creating terms, which in turn become concepts that enable a practice, Benjamin has contributed in a rare way to another conception of the archive and history. It is the constructivist principle which has been of the utmost interest in work that engages with images and questions of the archive. In another text,⁴³ Benjamin has set the constructivist principle in relation with the term *dialectical image*, the intent of which is to facilitate the construction of paradise out of the provided glimpses of alternative futures if otherwise concealed or forgotten connections with the past are revealed by the juxtaposition of images, as in the techniques of montage. The dialectical image, as Taussig writes, might even be understood as a montage “capturing both, the connections between the dissimilars and also that which is thereby captured.”⁴⁴ Capturing, juxtaposition, and montage are not things that can emerge from an additive principle; they can only be the result of work, of a life’s work, and of a practice. Benjamin underlines this insofar as he complicates the relation between the dialectical image and its reading. He writes, “Only dialectical images are genuinely

⁴² Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” Translation: Dennis Redmond 8/4/01, See <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>>. Accessed: July 2011.

⁴³ See Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).

⁴⁴ Michael Taussig (1987), 369.

historical—that is not archaic—images. The image that is read—which is to say, the image in the now of its recognisability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.”⁴⁵

The importance of Barthes’ and Benjamin’s propositions lie, in my view, in their attempts to create terms and concepts that recognise the existence of a possible *beyond*—one that acknowledges and enables practices. Barthe’s *obscure* meaning and Benjamin’s description of history as an image that *flits* by, threatening to disappear with every present that does not recognise itself as meant in it are two important examples of the search for and acknowledgement of something beyond language, something that only appears through images. My understanding of material collected in an archive as something that flits by unless somebody takes it in his/her hand and recognises something in it was one of the initiating moments of this work.

ARCHIVAL PRACTICE

How much Benjamin has influenced critical thinking on and artistic practice in and around the archive can be seen in Hal Foster’s article “An Archival Impulse.” Imbued with Benjamin’s vocabulary, Foster’s text describes the impulses of contemporary artists working with the archive. In his words, their works can be seen as “uncharted research” and “idiosyncratic probing,” making “historical information physically present”; the works are attempts “to connect what cannot be connected,” a turning of “excavation sites into construction sites,” practices where “the here-and-now of the work functions as a possible portal between an unfinished past and a reopened future,” and where “perverse orders . . . aim to disturb the symbolic order at large.”⁴⁶

While Foster is correct to emphasise the important role played by artists who work on questions related to archives, it is important to note that they rarely make work *for* archives. This project begins with the observation that although we “feverishly work”⁴⁷ on the terms around the archive, both the possibilities of acting

⁴⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999), 463.

⁴⁶ Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October*, 110 (2004): 3–22.

⁴⁷ See Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever* (New York/Goettingen: International Centre of Photography/Steidl Publishers, 2008); and Derrida (1998).

inside it and the scope of our archival practice have hardly changed—they are still forced through the “old” ideas and the “old” practices. On that account, we must ask what the fundamental questions of an archival practice are and find new or other modes that would be adequate for our knowledge and needs. In short, after the problems of the archive have been identified theoretically, the archive and the practice therein still involve difficult challenges and contradictions for practitioners, curators, historians, and artists; for those behind and in front of the camera; for those who search for images in the archive as well as those who try to produce images for it. Thus, this project is an exploration of the remaining problem in practice after the critique has been stated. It is not about simply extending the critique, but finding an archive and the practice with it.

User's Manual

This project is based on my assumption that one of the fundamental problems of the archive is caused by the division between, on the one side, theory and the organisation of the archive and, on the other side, the practice inside it. The rules and conventions of organisation that exist in archives often restrict working in and with them. Not only do I critique these assumptions and divisions; I try to find a form that avoids reproducing them. Therefore the dissertation will be organized as an archive itself. Instead of writing about specific artists, archives, projects, or concepts within individual chapters, I have arranged the material around four specific questions most relevant to my practice in and around the archive. These questions structure or arrange four *Cabinets*:

1. *How to work on the relationship between images and language?*
2. *What is an author?*
3. *What is missing in the archive?*
4. *What could an active archive be?*

As a whole, the PhD project seeks to offer answers to the question of how to create an archival praxis. The arrangement of the diverse sources attempts to re/work the relation between “research and practice” or “theory and practice”: since the reading of the work of others could be considered a “practice of watching” and the writing of a text for a video-essay a “form of theory,” the project in its entirety might be conceived as an articulation of a praxis in which the separation of the theoretical and the practical is itself questioned and undermined. I wish to call this praxis an expanded form of artistic production. The project began by observing the separation between artistic and “other” fields of photography, a separation I felt was extremely limiting and simplifying. Hence I have felt it important to articulate and arrange the materials differently. The often divided notions of form and content, works of art and writing, and theory and practice will be bridged and treated as equally important forms of production. Archives are chaotic and demanding for their users. The following proposal for an archive, therefore, is non-consistent yet assembled; it

attempts to circumvent a dangerous simplification of content in favour of one mode of organisation and one consistent argument and includes a variety of forms of documents, such as critical texts, images, works of art, and interviews. Each of the four *Cabinets* consists of:

- An INTRODUCTION that prologues the material and introduces the cabinet's main question
- An IMAGE that triggered the main question
- An ESSAY in the form of a case study
- An ART WORK by myself
- NOTES or INTERVIEWS for the archive, where necessary

Cabinet 1 investigates one of the primary reasons why making photographs *for* image archives does not occur to many contemporary artist-photographers: the archives' routine mode of organisation and classification does not provide a space or offer a place for more complex photographic practices—as opposed to embracing the constructivist principle, these archives do, indeed, work additively. Specifically, image archives are still organised around the single image that is classified in order to be located using keywords and language; and text, comments, notes, interviews, maps, or series of images are usually separated from the image itself. Hence complex relationships and additional materials are isolated into individual parts that must fit into the existing system of classification.

Much has been written about this relation between images and texts in archives. However, whereas the theoretical and critical approaches often focus on what the relationship between the two suggests for a viewer, little is written about the practice of relating them. A text, some words, or a caption are often important tools in the work of a photographer to expand on, communicate, and control the reading of his or her photographs. Often language is part of a practice that is described as “photographic or visual research.” Nevertheless, the more complex ways of working with the making of images are often excluded from the archive. *Cabinet 1* investigates practices and forms that produce a more complex method for working with images and language.

Cabinet 2 focuses on the issue of the author and asks anew, “What is an author?”⁴⁸ Routinely, image archives are organised through language. To find an image, one must rely on the relation between text and image: the user depends on the congruency between descriptions made by the archive’s organiser—who found the “right” terms, keywords, classifications—and his or her own idea. Whereas in commercial, journalistic, and historical image archives notions of place, time, and event are privileged, image archives in the art context are sorted by the name of the author. In each case, one could say that the relation between the image and the way to find it is pre-interpreted through a specific judgement or assessment on the part of the archive’s holder and organiser. The author is only one option for classifying images, one that is inflexible and often obstructive to other more complex modes of access, retrieval, and interpretation. Most crucially, the notion of the author reduces other participants in the photographic process to one individual. Thus the concept of the author is often not only complicated, it also hinders the location and interpretation of images, or assesses them in exceedingly specific ways.

The fact that images are commonly understood as being owned by their makers is another limiting factor that the prevailing notion of the author produces, even after images are sold. In *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Ariella Azoulay has argued that a photograph cannot have a single author and that a more complex understanding of the photographic process must include other actors who are part of it. Azoulay proposes an understanding of photography as a civil contract in which all actors involved—photographers, photographed persons, and spectators—are participants in the production of the meaning of photographs. For her, in opposition to the citizenship of a nation, *everybody* is a citizen of the citizenry of photography. Photographs, according to Azoulay, cannot be owned by anybody; concepts of individual property and ownership are “foreign to its logic.” “What is seen in a photograph evades all criteria for ownership, and cannot be appropriated; from this it is impossible to establish a single, stable meaning of photography that would negate or supersede all others.”⁴⁹ Consequently, all citizens of the civil contract are obliged to address and readdress images while constantly negotiating the construction of their

⁴⁸ See Michel Foucault, “What is an author?” in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, David Lodge (ed.) (London and New York: Longman, 2008), 196–210.

⁴⁹ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 102.

meaning. The civil contract of photography thus proposes a citizenship without a governing body, without a sovereign, but with a mutual obligation among its members, who hold the power to act. It organises “political relations in the form of an open and dynamic framework among individuals, without regulations and mediation by a sovereign.”⁵⁰

Cabinet 3 focuses on the question of what is missing in the archive in the way we organize and use it, and the way we work in relation to it. This cabinet tries to bring together a variety of thoughts and practices that address the problem of absence. Why are things absent in the first place? Have they never been produced, or were they not able to enter the archive? How do we deal with the knowledge that things or people or images are absent? How do we deal with absences that cannot simply be undone by an act of inclusion? Do other practices need to be developed to render absences visible? The critique of the archive has frequently led to a rejection of the archive altogether; as a contrast, *Cabinet 3* will include descriptions of practices that productively assume the critique while offering ways to encounter a complicated notion of absence within the making of an archive. The point is not only to find the persons and images that are missing, but also to develop another type of archival practice that refuses to exclude these people and images in the first place, a practice capable of acknowledging complexities and differences.

Cabinet 4 Most archives organise their images through language. To find an image one needs to rely on a keyword, search for a term, geographical location, year, or person, but some artists and critics have developed other modalities of organisation. Aby Warburg’s *Atlas*, for example, proposed a way of organising images according to cultural gestures. Warburg did not collect and sort images according to existing systems of classification; instead he developed a form that corresponded to what was, for him, contained in them and in what reappeared through them. The boards of the *Atlas* could thus also be considered an archive that correlates the gestures transmitted by the images.

In a similar way, Harun Farocki has often developed his films and his research around something he calls “a repertoire of gestures” — visual expressions or

⁵⁰ Ibid., 109.

actions that are continuously repeated in films (images of the workers leaving the factory, close-ups of hands).⁵¹ Farocki has in the past demanded another approach to film, one intended as a development in alternative systems of sorting and classification. In his work with the philosopher Friedrich Kittler in the 1990s, Farocki tried to create search engines that would permit users to locate images in databases through analogies between them instead of through keywords.⁵² The problem of organising masses of images is still present in current transformational processes aimed at turning analogue image archives into digital data banks. In commercial as well as shared databanks, two modes of the organisation of images are paramount: those done according to language (keywords) and those done according to single images.⁵³

As the artist Thomas Locher pointed out, there are specific keyword search terms that do not exist in a logic of systematisation. For example the keywords *public* or *private* produce zero results in data banks or image archives. These terms describe interpretations of images rather than what one can see; thus they do not apply and cannot be found. Similarly the film curator Stefanie Schulte Strathaus explained that some categorisations used to sort films and make them accessible in a popular form would exclude many films, as the given categories do not and cannot be applied to many of the films she is collecting. To apply the given formats would mean to consciously simplify their approaches and exclude them from a system.⁵⁴

Cabinet 4 thus addresses the question of what another archive *could be*. It engages with projects, thoughts, and theories that propose an active and more complex archival practice. The juxtaposition of activity and archive is conflicting and astonishing, though perhaps it is the very combination of the term and the doing that best describes “other” archives, which I define as archives that often seem to resist the idea of “pure” storage, accumulation, and “objectivity” and instead search for a mode of production through the archive itself. Many archives link the practice of collecting with the production of an activity related to it. Although they rarely

⁵¹ e.g. Harun Farocki, *Der Ausdruck der Hände*, Germany, 1979, 30 min.; *Arbeiter Verlassen die Fabrik*, Germany (1995), Video, 36 minutes.

⁵² See *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven*, Wolfgang Ernst, Stefan Heidenreich and Ute Holl (eds.) (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2003).

⁵³ See *Cabinets 3+4: Introduction*.

⁵⁴ Thomas Locher and Stefanie Schulte Strathaus at a talk entitled *Spielstand #9: Dem Archiv verschrieben – Zur Politik des Sammelns* at the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Berlin, 2009.

produce written declarations of their activities, archives' primary cause is often to act and to bring their documents into an actual or prospective being.

Dominant modes of dealing with the archive do not mirror the relation between images and language (through notes, interviews, descriptions, or essays) or between single images and series of images, nor do they reflect artists' critiques of the realist assumptions of photography. And yet how can we imagine an archive that does not start from the single image, that is not sorted by language, an archive that tries to meet the requirements of a more complex photographic process which involves manifold gestures, activities, and people? What other archival praxis could accommodate these processes? To what extent can a more complex archival praxis expand beyond the subjectivity of the user—the researcher—and into the archive itself? Would the demand for another, necessarily more complex archival practice require that we enter the archive with a different ability to look and see, and that the archive itself be able to see learn and change?

The four questions are large and encompass an enormous amount of material. Consequently I have selected and focused on what has been most relevant to my practice as an artist, since the project as a whole is concerned with how the working artist makes archives and finds an archival practice. The following structure is an experiment in the compilation of a wide range of materials, an attempt at an open form of organisation that may be expanded, commented, and reorganised by its user.

**Cabinet 1:
Language / Image**



Cabinet 1

What is the Relation between Language and Images?

C1_Quote by Walid Raad on the relation between language and images

C1_Introduction While moving from one place to another, photographs provoke various readings that are influenced by the language that surrounds them—The text around the image can be personal, explanatory, illustrative, interpretative, independent, tagged—The writer and the photographer: a collaboration; positions of the spy and the counter-spy—Image and text: prohibition, regulation, sorting, classification, photo essay, and narration—Archive and language: abstraction, loss of context and use, clearing house of meaning (Sekula)—Archival systems of rationalisation and language—The discursive spaces of photography; cultural worlds, forms of knowledge(s) (Krauss)—Practices around the archive: thick descriptions (Geertz), general captions (Lange), changing fields (Goldblatt)—The image's front and back: horizontally split—Digitalization—Struggles, translations, readability (Villesen)—Dedisciplinary exercises (Mitchell).

C1_Image: Hine Six out of one hundred images by Lewis Hine photographed in 1910 in Pennsylvania as part of a commission for the National Child Labor Committee.

C1_Essay: Unfinished Business Visibility and Enlightenment—Social documentary photography and its promises—Lewis Hine—The critique (Rosler) and the question of what remains despite all—A series of images in different archives—Rules, laws and regulations of archives—Public archives and commercial archives—Changes in reading—Control versus interpretation?—Accessibility versus historicity?—The right of the author versus the right of the owner?—Practices—Uncanny encounters—Travelling images—Faces and landscapes.

C1_Work: Schaber_Picture Mining Trip to one of the commercial holders of the Hine images (Corbis)—Relations between places and images across time—Reinterpreting images, adding new ones—Montage of the old with the contemporary—Uncanniness—Lecture.

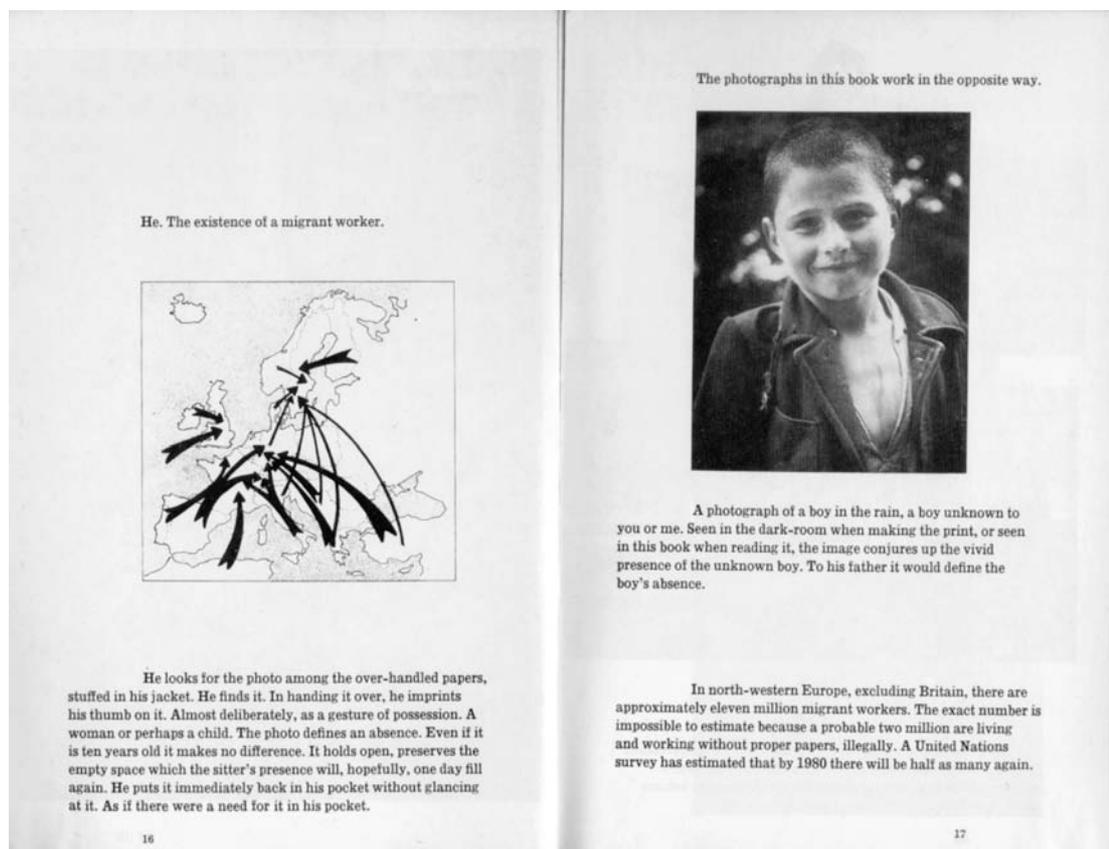
“As I pointed my lens at the high flying jets overhead, I was immediately tuned to the pilot’s and his or her next target. Without knowing how and without being conscious of this, my lens was automatically redirected to the scene of the soon to be devastated site. My shutter clicked as a large cloud of smoke, debris and bodies had formed. As I looked at these, these resulting images, it was equally unclear to me how the gloom of smoke and fire appeared as an already cut out shape. And I mean with mean, clear, sharp cuts. The flattened blooms seemed suspended and even projected a slight shadow on the paper white thin background. Indeed the plume appeared paper-thin. A suspended plane of its own in already published and reproduced documents, as was evident by the caption. The caption that somehow inserted itself right here on the lower left hand corner of the frame. A caption that stated, as captions usually do, title, media, dimensions and location of the documents.”¹

¹ Walid Raad, Lecture at the UNP in Berlin, approx. at min. 7–10. (emphasis and transcription mine).

Introduction Cabinet 1:

Language / Image

He looks for the photo among the over-handled papers, stuffed in his jacket. He finds it. In handing it over, he imprints his thumb on it. Almost deliberately, as a gesture of possession. A woman or perhaps a child. The photo defines an absence. Even if it is ten years old it makes no difference. It holds open, preserves the empty space which the sitter's presence will, hopefully, one day fill again. He puts it back in his pocket without glancing at it. As if there were a need for it in his pocket.



The photographs in this book work in the opposite way.

A photograph of a boy in the rain, a boy unknown to you and me. Seen in the dark-room when making the print, or seen in this book when reading it, the image conjures up the vivid presence of the unknown boy. To his father it would define the boy's absence.¹

¹ John Berger and Jean Mohr, *A Seventh Man: The story of a migrant worker in Europe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 16–17.

John Berger's description of the image of the boy appears simple: our perception of photographs changes according to the relation we have with the person pictured. Yet the straightforwardness of his observation also acknowledges the complexities in practices in and around photography: things can be close, but they can also travel, become distant and relate to something unknown. While nestled in the father's pocket, the image requires no explanation, needs no words on its back, but printed in the book, it is accompanied by language and shown with a caption and two paragraphs that reflect upon photography. The image becomes part of a larger frame. The maker of the book imagines that the image will be read by distant people, who will see the image of the boy as one amongst a series of images telling the story of a migrant worker in Europe.

Berger's thoughts on the photograph appear in a book he made together with the photographer Jean Mohr. The book is one of Berger and Mohr's collaboratively undertaken experiments in photography. A project in which they address the connection between language and images by asking the question "how to narrate a story," this book is different from other (often more illustrative or explanatory) works on the issue of photography and text. This collaboration offers a more independent relation between the two. The text—which reflects on photography while relating the story and history of migrant workers' living and working conditions in Europe in the 1970s—floats around the images. Rather than explaining the images or utilising them as illustrative material, it circumscribes them, providing another layer of thoughts on migration.

This mode of joining text and images together, often termed a photo essay, is sometimes associated with a collaboration between two distinct voices, two varying positions on how to describe and picture something. James Agee has quite famously named these the position of the spy (the writer) and the position of the counter spy (the photographer), suggesting that both positions intend to make public something that was secret or unknown. The spy and the counter spy join forces to report and mediate from different perspectives, and perhaps also with different briefs

on how to approach a subject. “The photographs are not illustrative. They and the text are coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative.”²

(FULLY) COLLABORATIVE

Mohr collaborated with writers on a number of projects,³ an especially prominent example being the book he published with Edward Said: *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*. The project’s history, however, is fraught with difficulties. The book was made in response to administrative interference in the mode of exhibition of a series of photographs by Mohr at the UN Geneva headquarters in 1983. As Said writes in the book’s introduction, the photographs Mohr brought back from Palestine were “indeed wonderful; the official response, however, was puzzling and, to someone with a taste for irony, exquisite. You can hang them up, we were told, but no writing can be displayed with them. No legends, no explanations. A compromise was finally negotiated whereby the name of the country or place (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, West Bank, Gaza) could be affixed to the much-enlarged photographs, but not one word more.”⁴

Although Said recounts the absence of a clear explanation on the part of the UN explaining its inhospitality toward the inclusion of more text in the images’ exhibition, he does not write about why Mohr exhibited the photographs regardless, or how the exhibition was displayed and received. Instead Said turns to the photographs themselves and writes a book that, in view of its introduction, seems to function like a series of expanded captions surrounding Mohr’s photographs, turning into a photographic essay.

The regulation of modes of “captioning the image” in the exhibition is a form of institutional control that manages the image’s circulation and interpretation, and

² James Agee in James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let us now Praise Famous Men* (Orlando: Mariner Books, 2001), 15.

³ Besides the *The Seventh man or the migrant workers*, Mohr also collaborated with John Berger in the following publications: *A Fortunate Man (the story of a rural doctor in England)* (1967), *Art and Revolution* (1969) and *Another way of telling* (1984). He also collaborated with other writers: with Edward Said on *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986), with Louis Gaulis on *La Suisse insolite* (1971), with Jean-Jacques Roth on *Armin Jordan, Portrait d’un Chef* (1997), and with Bernard Crettaz, Jean-Philippe Rapp, John and Katia Berger on *Derrière le miroir*, (2000).

⁴ Jean Mohr and Edward Said, *After The Last Sky* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1986), 3.

Said and Mohr's decision to proceed with their work on Mohr's pictures in the form of a book is a reaction to this control. In other words, the book had to be made because another kind of exhibition had been inhibited.

WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

The captions that the UN allowed Mohr to use for the exhibition are reminiscent of an archival logic deployed when dealing with photographs: quite often, on an image's back or caption card, is written the name of the photographer, the place the photograph was taken, and perhaps the date it was taken or filed. The absence of any option for a more complex usage of language in relation to the photograph is, for Allan Sekula, the core problem of the photographic archive. For him, "In an archive, the possibility of meaning is 'liberated' from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an *abstraction* from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context. Thus the specificity of 'original' uses and meanings can be avoided and even made invisible. . . . So new meanings come to supplant old ones, with the archive serving as a kind of 'clearing house' of meaning."⁵

In a seminal text on the subject, Sekula criticises histories of photography for rarely mentioning that photography's origins, and many of its practices, are rooted in the beginnings of police filing systems, specifically those invented by Bertillon and Galton. According to Sekula, Bertillon and Galton's work advanced the development of photography's role in such systems and outlined the basic parameters for a bureaucratic approach to visual documents in general. Photography became the object and the means of bibliographic rationalisation. "Just as photographs were to be incorporated into the realm of the text, so also the text could be incorporated into the realm of the photograph. If photography retained its prestige as a universal language, it increasingly did so in conjunction with a textual paradigm that was housed within the library."⁶

⁵ Allan Sekula, "Photography between Labour and Capital," in Sekula, *Mining Photographs and other Pictures 1948–1968* (Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983), 194.

⁶ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *October*, 39 (1986): 57.

As a writer and photographer, Sekula himself works and exhibits within the art context, although his installations and catalogues mirror the practices of the photo essayist. Sekula introduces his work *Photography against the Grain* with the following assertion: “This is a book about photography. This is also a book of photographs. Here is one way in which this book brushes photography against the grain: normally separated tasks of writer and photographer, of “critique” and “visual artist”—are here allowed to coexist, perhaps uneasily between the covers of a single volume.”⁷ Suspicious of the archive, but also suspicious of the institution of the museum, Sekula’s photographic practice and language operate between these two fields, somehow pulling and pushing their limits while reminding his viewers and readers of the the histories and conditions surrounding photographic culture. In his series of photographs, Sekula understands his use of language as a practice that attempts to “brush the medium against its grain.” In assuming and maintaining control over how his images appear in installations and publications, he resists allowing them to become a fragment, a rudimentary entity that can be adopted for other purposes.

TRACKING BY NUMBERS

The activity of rewriting the history of nineteenth-century photography according to other, more contemporary intentions is vehemently criticised by Rosalind Krauss in an article on the discursive spaces of photography.⁸ According to Krauss, photographs are part of discrete cultural worlds that presuppose different viewer expectations and communicate different types of knowledge. Photographs operate as representations in diverse discursive spaces. The same photograph printed in one distinct way appears differently in the field of geology than in the field of the museum. Looking to the work of Eugene Atget (1857-1927) as an example, Krauss shows how these discursive systems operate. Atget’s work, which was left as a vast

⁷ Allan Sekula, “Photography against the Grain,” in Sekula, *Dismal Science: Photo Works 1972–1996* (Normal: University Galleries, Illinois State University, 1999), 150.

⁸ Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces,” *Art Journal*, 42 (1982).

collection of photographs, entered a range of discursive spaces from 1925 on, however all of the adaptations of these discursive spaces were, in Krauss's view, only partial and derivative of a specific selection driven by specific formal or aesthetic intentions. As Atget's work gained prevalence in art contexts, it became obligatory to assess and describe it as the work of an artist with a consistent oeuvre and a higher idea of the work in general. In an effort to uncover the intentions of an artist within his archive, historians were looking for a code hidden within the system he used to number his negatives. Yet the code that was finally discovered originated in the filing system used by the libraries and topographic collections for whom Atget worked. What the historian found, therefore, was less an idea of an artist than that of the museum's system of classification, itself an archival order whose purpose was to collect the artist's aesthetic soul. Ironically, the historian found not the aesthetic soul of the artist but the museum's file cabinet.

THICK DESCRIPTIONS

Krauss is concerned with the reorganisation of nineteenth-century photographic archives according to contemporary and modernist parameters. In the case of Atget's work her critique is addressed to the institutions that render Atget an artist and produce exhibitions with their own intentions, alienating the processes within Atget's own production practice. She specifically points towards the incoherence that arises from such a reorganisation and from the consequent erasure of the practices, institutions, and relations that nineteenth-century photography was part of. What Krauss describes as a process in danger of being enacted retrospectively is often enacted *already*—in the making of the archive itself. In other words, if archives are modes of production, then certain modes of production are excluded even before they can take place. Sometimes archives disable certain photographic practices while they are in progress, or change them through defacement upon their entering the archive. If one looks at the work of Dorothea Lange, for example, and at the institutions that commissioned her work as well as the archives that hold it today, it is hard to decide whether she was a documentary photographer, an artist, a photojournalist, or an ethnographer. Present-day archival and institutional

6. Place Bernard Halpern, 5th arrondissement, 1898, 1923, and 1924



6.1 page 89
Place Bernard Halpern, toward the rue Daubenton and the Church of Saint-Médard, May 1898
21.4 x 17.3 cm (image);
21.4 x 17.3 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.l., S^t Médard; u.r., 3043
Series PP 3043 MH3847N
MC Ph 6703



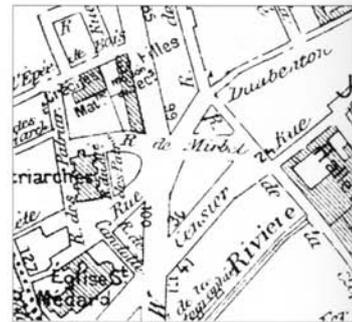
6.2 page 90
Place Bernard Halpern, toward the rue Daubenton and the Church of Saint-Médard, 1923
Unmounted gelatin silver chloride print
22.5 x 17.2 cm (image);
22.9 x 17.9 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.c., Coin de la rue / Daubenton; u.r., 6437
Series AP 6437
MC Ph 3826 (page 1 in the album *Vieux Paris, Coins Pittoresques*)



6.3 page 90
Place Bernard Halpern, toward the rue Daubenton and the Church of Saint-Médard, 1923
Unmounted mat albumen silver print
21.8 x 17.6 cm (image);
22.1 x 18.1 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.c., Coin Rue Daubenton; u.r., 6438
Series AP 6438 MH3116N
MC Ph 3827 (page 2 in the album *Vieux Paris, Coins Pittoresques*)



6.4 page 91
Place Bernard Halpern, toward the rue Daubenton and the Church of Saint-Médard, 1924
Unmounted mat albumen silver print
21.9 x 17.5 cm (image);
22.4 x 17.7 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Recto: BN stamp i.c. on print; inscribed in ink on print
i.r., 48996; Verso: u.l., S^t Médard; u.r., 6501
Series AP 6501 MH8703N
BN T040391



Detail of 1900 map, showing Place Bernard Halpern

7. The Church of Saint-Séverin, 5th arrondissement, 1898–1923

1. Earliest views of the Church of Saint-Séverin and environs, 1898–1903 (7.1–7.20)



7.1 page 95
Rue des Prêtres-Saint-Séverin, toward the church, 1898
21.8 x 17.5 cm (image);
21.8 x 17.8 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.l., S^t Séverin; in blue pencil u.r., 3037
Series PP 3037 MH38449N
MC Ph 6828



7.2 page 96
Rue Saint-Séverin, from the rue Saint-Jacques toward the church, 1898
21 x 17.5 cm (image);
22.2 x 17.6 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.l., V^o, u.c., Rue S^t Séverin; u.r., 3038
Series PP 3038 MH38387N
MC Ph 6838



7.3
West front of the church along the rue des Prêtres-Saint-Séverin, 1898
22.6 x 17.8 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.l., S^t Séverin; u.r., 3040
Series PP 3040 MH38368N
MC Ph 6839



7.4
Shop abutting the apse of the church, rue Saint-Jacques, 1898
21.4 x 17.6 cm (image);
22.2 x 17.8 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.c., S^t Séverin; u.r., 3041
Series PP 3041
MC Ph 6839



7.5 page 97
Main portal of the church, rue des Prêtres-Saint-Séverin, 1898
21.3 x 17.4 cm (image);
21.7 x 17.4 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.l., S^t Séverin; u.r., 3569
Series AP 3569
MC Ph 6830



7.6 page 98
Rue de la Parcheminerie, toward the rue Saint-Jacques, May 1899
21.8 x 17.2 cm (image);
21.8 x 17.8 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.l., V^o, u.c., R de la Parcheminerie; u.r., 3602
Series AP 3602
MC Ph 6809



7.13 page 102
Rue des Prêtres-Saint-Séverin, toward the rue Boutetrie and the Musée de Cluny, 1899
21.5 x 17.5 cm (image and sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.c., R Boutetrie; u.l., 3684
Series AP 3684 MH38296N
MC Ph 6814



7.14 page 103
Rue Saint-Jacques, walls of the hotel abutting the apse of the church, August 1899
22.5 x 17.8 cm (image);
22.6 x 18.4 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.c., S^t Séverin; u.r., 3689
Series AP 3689 MH38236N
MC Ph 6858



7.15 page 104
Rue Saint-Jacques from the rue Galande toward the church, 1899 or 1900
17.6 x 21.4 cm (image);
17.8 x 22.2 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: c.r., S^t Séverin; i.r., 3727
Series AP 3727 MH38225N
MC Ph 6857



7.16 page 105
Rue Saint-Jacques, after the demolition of the stores abutting the apse of the church, 1902
17.7 x 22 cm (image);
17.8 x 22 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: c.l., S^t Séverin en 1902. Rue / S^t Jacques—après le / Dégageement de l'Église / S^t Séverin / (Voir la 1^{re} série); u.l., 4529
Series AP 4529 MH3812N
MC Ph 6862



7.17
Rue Saint-Jacques, toward the quays with the intersection of the rue de la Parcheminerie at the left, 1903
17.8 x 21.9 cm (image);
17.9 x 21.9 cm (sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: c.l., La Rue S^t Jacques entre / le Bd S^t Germain et la / Rue du petit pont / (ou disparaitre) / (S^t); u.l., 4789
Series AP 4789
MC Ph 6305



7.18 page 99
Rue de la Parcheminerie, from the rue Saint-Jacques, 1903
22 x 17.4 cm (image and sheet)
Inscriptions. Verso: u.c., Rue de la Parcheminerie / Vue prise de la S^t Jacques / (S^t); u.r., 4790
Series AP 4790
MC Ph 6812

One way of indexing Atget's photographs, taken from David Harris, *Eugène Atget: Unknown Paris*.

assessments of her work are based on categorisations that Lange herself might not have intended. So which discursive space should be selected? The Library of Congress holds the work she produced for the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s, but it only holds the work she produced on commission for a specific purpose, thus situating her in one context. By contrast, the archive of the Oakland Museum of California holds Lange's personal negative file, more than 25,000 images, over 6,000

vintage prints, and a selection from Lange's personal papers and library, thus situating her as an independent photographer. Or the Getty Museum, which bought, among other works by Lange, a vintage print of the image of the Migrant Mother for a quarter of a million dollars and describes Lange as a documentary photographer and artist.⁹ How would we name her profession if we had access to her way of working and her understanding of her own work? How would another reading of her work and another assessment of her production change our view of the images she made? How would the text that she worked with in her series of images alter our understanding of the situations she pictured?¹⁰

The *General Captions* that Lange applied in her photography have been omitted from the centre of discussion. They have been excluded from the archives. Only recently have we seen studies addressing the relationship between her photographic work and her attempts to communicate accompanying information. Anne Whiston Spirn's recently published book *Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field* might be one of the most thoroughly researched in this respect.¹¹ Spirn compares a series of images from Lange's work from 1939 for the Farm Security Administration Project (FSA) to other works the FSA commissioned her to make and to books she published independently (e.g. *An American Exodus*, a collaboration with Paul Taylor).

The work Lange produced for the FSA in 1939 was her last commission for the office before she was fired for good. She travelled to California, North Carolina, and the Pacific Northwest and photographed hundreds of images that she grouped into arrangements around seventy-two general captions. Each caption carries the same heading: a date, a location, a map code, and a subject description. Sometimes Lange added quotations and notes. Sometimes newspaper and journal clippings, research reports, government memoranda, and advertising brochures were also included. For Lange, telling the story of "people in their relations to their institutions,

⁹ The webpage of the Getty collection states that Lange was "one of the few female photographers whose name is widely known. She is most recognized for her social documentary work during the Great Depression of the 1930s. As is the case with many well-known artists, her talent is often associated with one image." See <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/lange/>. Accessed July 20, 2010.

¹⁰ See Cabinet 2: Introduction.

¹¹ Anne Whiston Spirn, *Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs & Reports from the Field* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

to their fellow men, and to the land”¹² required that many of her photographs be grouped by subject, arranged, cross-referenced, and “buttressed” by words. Framed by a general caption, the images and words acquire multiple layers, embodying what anthropologist Clifford Geertz would much later term “thick description.”¹³ Spirn describes Lange’s method of working as one of a discoverer: “With the sensibility of an artist, she adapted methods of social science and literature to develop photography as a medium of research and storytelling.”¹⁴ For Lange the word “camera” encompassed a whole approach to photography as a way of seeing and knowing, from looking through the viewfinder out in the field to creating essays with images and words back in her studio.



GENERAL CAPTION NO. 57
DATE: October 3, 1939
PLACE: Willamette Valley, Oregon
SUBJECT: Yamhill Farms (FSA)

A former Resettlement Administration project which was turned over to FSA represents a demonstration in which 105 farm families from the submarginal land areas or rehabilitation families having insufficient acreage were established on complete and developed farm units, in parts of Yamhill, Washington, and Polk Counties. Each unit is a diversified family sized farm, with modern buildings and improvements. Size averages about 75 acres with 40 to 50 in cultivation. They have forty years to pay for their units. Refer to Caption No. 58 for photographs of one of the community cooperative activities of this project.

This farm is one of eleven newly established farms on a contiguous piece of land. The owner from whom the RA [Resettlement Administration] purchased 500 acres had inherited the land, built himself a large home, and ran the farm with a manager. That farm was subdivided by RA into seven farms: three poultry units, four diversified. Adjacent to the east was a 400 acre farm, which was subdivided by RA into four diversified farms. All but one of the families were moved onto the project from submarginal farms in other parts of Oregon.

Cory G. Granger, aged 39. Born and reared in eastern Nebraska. Has lived on farms all his life. His people were prosperous, stable, Midwestern farmers; native Americans. Has had two years in high school and is interested in scientific aspects of agriculture.

Was married in 1929 and leased a 160 acre farm for himself. Didn't have sufficient credit to carry him through the bad years that followed and "lost out." Then operated on year to year basis, small scale, but the drought finally "finished me," and he decided to come West.

Granger left Nebraska with \$7.00 in his pocket and hitch-hiked his way to Oregon. He landed at Eugene ten days later, with \$2.80. He got a job on a dairy farm. His wife, three babies, and their household belongings arrived six weeks later. She drove out in an old truck. She was ten days making the trip. They then lived in an attic of a chicken house on the dairy farm with nine hundred birds on the lower floor. His wages were \$30.00 per month, he worked 14 hours a day.

He is now reestablished on an 80 acre farm (Yamhill farms), 22 acres under cultivation. He plans a dairy unit. Has twelve cows. Has 95 laying pullets. The eggs pay for the groceries and the children's clothing.

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Dorothea Lange, *General Caption No. 57*.

¹² Lange, quoted in Spirn (2008), 11.

¹³ Clifford Geertz, *Thick Descriptions: Toward an Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

¹⁴ Spirn, 47.

Spirn's book is a critique of the institutions that commissioned Lange's work and subsequently failed to acknowledge the importance of the captions. In her opinion the fact that Lange's *General Captions* were rarely published proves that Lange's photography is often reduced to single, iconic images.¹⁵ Today one can find the general captions in the Museum of Oklahoma as well as on microfiche in the Library of Congress in Washington DC, but the link between images and text, and the series and groupings of images alongside the extended notes are no longer in existence. Roy Stryker, head of the FSA, sometimes erased them, sometimes put them aside, and often added his own words. Spirn offers no definition of "photographic research," but rather describes one photographer's process in which something like a practice of photographic research was developed. For Lange language was another layer to work with, a tool she could exploit to elaborate things that were not *in* the picture. That the majority of institutions that used her photographs failed to consult Lange's captions seems more significant than a mere gap in procedure. Together the series and captions form a project in itself, a project that Lange could rarely publish as such. Maybe only *An American Exodus*, the work she compiled together with the sociologist Paul Taylor, demonstrates what she wanted to offer through her reciprocal practices of photography and writing.¹⁶ The archives and commissioners of Lange's work often disabled her mode of production by separating her writing and her field notes from her images. Even if these notes are included in the archives that hold her work today, they do not support any reconnection between her two distinct modes of working—those of the spy and the counter spy.

COMPLICATIONS

Language surrounding images exists in nearly all discursive fields where photography is present. Even the absence of language functions like a presence. How language is related to images or what kind of language is used to accompany

¹⁵ See Cabinet 2: Introduction, especially the discourse around Lange's image of the *Migrant Mother*.

¹⁶ See Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (Paris: Editions Jean-Michel Place, 2000).

photographs is dependent on the specific discursive field or the context in which an image appears. Most practitioners in those fields apply those rules intuitively or according to the normative codes or standards that govern how pictures are read in their respective field. The examples I've been discussing record practices that push at those limits and reject those standards' status as law. Dorothea Lange, Jean Mohr, and Allan Sekula are not "normal" artists/photographers in how they deal with the parameters of their own fields; they stand as examples of how certain laws can be changed, stretched, or reinterpreted. All of them use language in their images as a complimentary form, and all of them move between various fields of photography, such as the arts, documentary photography, sociology, and politics.

Categories of authorship, oeuvre, and art; ideas of categorising, labelling, and naming images; keywords, texts, essays, names of authors, dates of production, numbers, codes, or filing systems—all of these operate around and with images. In practice, institutions not only re-evaluate or re-categorise an artist's work long after it has been made; often institutions prevent certain modes of production or working modes from being undertaken in the first place.

CORRUPTION

For some photographers the limits of their field become too narrow, and so they move to other ones. The photographer and artist David Goldblatt is a case in point. Goldblatt has worked professionally with photography since as early as the 1950s. For a long time he earned his money selling images to magazines and creating advertising imagery. However, the major work through which he became well-known internationally is a group of independently produced images of everyday life in South Africa.¹⁷ In this series of images he depicted life under apartheid and developed a body of work that since the 1990s has contributed much to the understanding of the system and its operations on the ground.

¹⁷ See, for example, *On The Mines* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1973); *Cape Dutch Homesteads* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1981), with Margaret Courtney-Clark and John Kench; *Lifetimes: Under Apartheid* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), with Nadine Gordimer; *Some Afrikaners Photographed* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1975); as well as *In Boksburg* (Cape Town: Errata Editions, 1982).

I encountered Goldblatt's work when it was exhibited in Europe in the 1990s. Besides the high quality of his individual images, the most interesting aspects for me were his mapping of the photographs and his use of various captioning styles, both of which he had used and experimented with in other exhibitions and in books. The texts and maps were not displayed next to the image; they were often separate entities that one had to find by moving through the exhibition space or turning pages in a book.

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2586, Zone 2, Pimville, with the registered tenant, Michael Meleba and his wife. Soweto, Transvaal. September 1970.



Soweto is a vast sprawl of townships between 20 and 40 kilometres to the south-west of Johannesburg. In 1972 it officially had 94 162 dwelling units,¹ most of them like No. 2586. This, the Type 51/6, had four rooms, no interior doors or ceilings, and sometimes no floor. There was a lavatory and cold water tap in the backyard. Tens of thousands of houses, variants of this plan, were built in townships throughout the country between 1952 and 1965 by the National Party government. Then, as part of a determined effort to reverse the flow of Africans from the 'homelands' into the cities, the government stopped all development in African townships between 1965 and 1984.

Nonetheless 'illegal' immigration to the cities continued, which, combined with the natural increase of population resulted in severe overcrowding. In Soweto, as many as 20 people lived in houses like No. 2586.

Each house was rented to a registered tenant whose right to occupancy depended on satisfying stringent influx control criteria conferring the right to live and work in that urban area and no other. Failure to pay rent was a civil and a criminal matter, and often resulted in eviction and a fine or imprisonment.

¹ Ellen Hellman. 'Soweto'. Optima, March 1973.

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Window, White City, Jabavu. Soweto, Transvaal. January 1973.



The curlicued bars were more than protection against burglars. Soweto was intended as a dormitory for labour, not as a home in which people might hope to put down roots. Seemingly to make this clear, the authorities gave streets neither names nor numbers. The only identifying address for a house was its serial number within a zone of several thousand uniform houses. The installation of brightly painted burglar bars, made to order from a chosen pattern, was therefore an assertion of individuality, a public act of home-making that helped distinguish one house from another. Backyard wrought-iron workshops provided the service.

During the 1980s when it became revolutionary strategy to make the townships ungovernable and a rent boycott was

instituted, some residents obliterated house numbers and thus sabotaged the administration of the system. In post-apartheid South Africa it became extremely difficult to counter what had become a culture of non-payment of rent and service charges.

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'Location in the sky': the servants' quarters of Essanby House. Jeppe Street, Johannesburg, Transvaal. 4 April 1984.



Here lived the men who serviced and guarded this building in the centre of the city. Flat-cleaners and night-watchmen were invariably migrant workers with their homes and families in one of the homelands'. A man might work for six months or a year and then go home for two or three months. Usually a relative or a friend from the same village would hold his job for him during his absence.

The government tried to whiten the cities by reducing concentrations of Blacks living in what came to be called 'locations in the sky'. A 1966 ruling stipulated that 'the only Africans who may stay overnight in blocks of flats in White

areas are one boiler attendant, one watchman, one servant per five flats, and, in compassionate cases, one extra servant per ten flats'.¹ Some 10 000 people were forced out of Hillbrow and central Johannesburg to single sex hostels in Soweto,² and about 2 500 from the northern suburbs to the hostels of Alexandra Township, in pursuance of these rulings.³ (See 171.)

¹ Survey of Race Relations. 1972. Johannesburg: SAIRR. 147.

² A. J. Christopher. 1994. *The Atlas of Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Routledge and the Witwatersrand University Press.

³ Survey of Race Relations.

The captions and maps offered information about the photographed places and people and often provided an analysis of Goldblatt's own relation to them. In this sense the captions are seldom unbiased, scientific, or purely informational, though they often speak from the position of a person who has been on site, encountering and speaking with people. In the extended captions, Goldblatt often tells the stories of the people he met and photographed and provides more general information about the site as well as its history and politics.

In view of the way Goldblatt arranges the various elements in exhibition spaces or in books, he seems to have had little interest in controlling the perception of his images. Instead he was in search of ways the images could attain additional layers of meaning and thereby compel viewers to make a decision regarding which interpretative direction to take. His first exhibitions in Europe in the 1990s suggested that the mode of perceiving his works, via texts or via images alone, was up to the visitor.¹⁸ The viewer had to decide how to perceive the images while walking around, bringing the various layers together by him/herself.

In later books and exhibitions, Goldblatt sometimes chose not to display his expanded maps or captions.¹⁹ What he kept were short descriptions that accompanied the images: "Speculative development by a property developer in supposedly 'authentic Cape Dutch' style, Agatha, Tzaneen, Transvaal, 10 April 1989"²⁰—for example. This varied method, which opts to show only the image series, might stem from Goldblatt's becoming more present and active in an international art context, a context in which a display of images alone or a reading more bound to him as an author or artist was more common. Or perhaps it derived from the situation that his audience became more international, making the information he provided inappropriate—or from the simple fact that some of his series required no additional information through captions and maps whatsoever.²¹

The most interesting question regarding Goldblatt's works, however, appears to lie elsewhere. Abigail Salomon-Godeau has suggested that the renewal of

¹⁸ See David Goldblatt, *South Africa: The Structure of Things Then* (Oxford University Press Southern Africa, 1998).

¹⁹ See David Goldblatt's catalogue accompanying the traveling exhibition first shown at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA): *fifty-one years*, (Barcelona: actar, 2001).

²⁰ See *Ibid.*, 314.

²¹ This might be the case in the following work: David Goldblatt, *Intersections* (Munich: Prestel, 2005).

documentary photography is not predicated solely on “a full awareness of the role played by context, subject/object relations, and the various structuring mechanisms that determine photographic meaning”; rethinking documentary in a rigorous and serious way also “includes an insistence on maintaining control over the work in terms of exhibition, publication, or distribution.”²² This may have served as a motor for Goldblatt’s working method, and perhaps it also sheds light on Goldblatt’s reasons for moving from other forms of production and distribution into the art context. Yet if one carefully follows his choice of wording, another apparently important aspect emerges. In an interview with Okwui Enwezor, Goldblatt made the following remarks:

Enwezor: I am struck by the sense of indeterminacy in your work, the distance it keeps from the overt politicalism of much of photojournalism. Was it because you were apolitical or were not an activist that you took this direction? There’s an ambivalence, an elliptical quality, and yet when we look at the connecting thread among your concerns and interests over time, you’ve produced an extraordinary political analysis. How conscious was that?

Goldblatt: Once I became seriously engaged in it, photography became my way of being politically active. It was a political act. I must be careful to tell you, though, that I would not allow my photographs to be used for political purposes.

Enwezor: Why, because it is a corruption?

Goldblatt: In a sense. It was important to me that my photographs be used or seen in contexts that respected the integrity of the subjects and that were true to my intentions. I came to learn, however, that the message that editors, propagandists, and political bodies wished to attach to my pictures rarely corresponded with my own concerns. I took these photographs because I was engaged in a dialogue—between the subject and me.

Enwezor: An exchange . . .

Goldblatt: An exchange, absolutely. This somewhat perversely individual approach was probably the factor in how my work took shape. It also made me bad friends, most painfully, with people with whom I was actually in political agreement, but to whom I refused the use of my photographs. Among these

²² Abigail Solomon Godeau, “Who is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography,” in Abigail Solomon Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 169–183; See also Cabinet 1: Essay.

were the African National Congress and the Black Sash. While I disagreed with some of the ANC's policies, I was at one with its members' aims, and I was entirely in sympathy with the work of the women in the Black Sash. But both of these organizations wanted to use my photographs in contexts not intended by me. So, difficult though it was, I refused.²³

Goldblatt suggests that a rigorous rethinking of documentary photography goes beyond the need "to control the publication and distribution of one's work" and involves a "respect [for] the integrity of the subjects pictured" as well as an outward thinking and an inward thinking—the two exact moments which are marked by the camera's click. From a theoretical point of view, it seems more interesting to examine what can be done after a photograph has already been made. However, from the perspective of a person who holds the camera and makes a picture, the reasons, and therefore also the wording of why and how one wants to retain control, might have an entirely different motivation.

. . . It was important to me that my photographs be used or seen in contexts that respected the integrity of the subjects and that were true to my intentions . . .

Looking at Goldblatt's method and the way he describes a protectiveness towards the people he depicts, one could also suggest that the art space and publication formats he chooses offer him the best possible conditions for achieving this end. As an author or artist, one could describe him as occupying a position on the fringes of production. He and only he must decide what is necessary or inessential, what steps can and cannot be taken. This position of the author or artist is usually discussed in relation to legal definitions of authorship and thus in relation to the rights held by a "creative person" with regard to the ownership or control of their work. Goldblatt's wording here, however, seems to be an important indication that a photographer's position points in two directions: towards the things and persons depicted, and towards the modes of making those images public.²⁴

²³ David Goldblatt, *fifty-one years*, (Barcelona: actar, 2001), 17–18.

²⁴ See Cabinet 2: Introduction.

FLIPPING SIDES

In the archive, general captions, essayistic forms of language, or longer descriptions are hard to find. Historically, archives have offered limited information about the production and circulation of the images on the latter's back side. Thus, images in the archive had two sides and the image archive is, as Hito Steyerl puts it, horizontally split. In her view, this split between a contextual placing and an imaginary de-placing runs right through the middle of a visual document and, metaphorically speaking, divides visual documents into a back and a front side.²⁵ Yet Steyerl's metaphor of the front and the back side is also a practice of writing and research that is currently undergoing changes. In the future we might be able to distinguish between photographic research that relied on the older method of noting information on the back of a photograph—which the user flipped or turned over in order to acquire—and photographic research in digital archives where this is no longer possible. For historians, the backside of images in archives was the side that provided information, offered uses, and named host institutions. Titles and places, authors and dates, and the stamps of the institutions could always be found on the backside of photographs, accessible simply by turning them over. Many consider the backside of a photograph the starting point of any research. There we can read not only the basic information given to an image, but also its temporal progression, visible in markings that record its acquisition, hosting, and re/working. Few have referred to the problem that is posed to us by digital image archives, where the turning over of the image is already performed by the archive itself and the two sides have been merged into one. Unless we are able to find the term that relates to the logic of the archive's mode of tagging, we might not be able to find an image at all.

Tagging is the supreme practice of labelling images in the archive, a process through which images are translated and thereby included into a classificatory scheme. Yet the alienation of images from context and language as well as their re/organisation into the language of the archive, its keywords and categorizations, poses significant problems for the acknowledgement of the complexity of the archive

²⁵ See Hito Steyerl, *Die Farbe der Wahrheit. Dokumentarismen im Kunstfeld* (Vienna: Turia und Kant, 2008); especially the chapter "Paläste der Erinnerung, Dokumente und Monumente. Politik des Archivs," 25–40.

and the material it hosts, and for the practices that relate to it. And this applies not only to questions of the reorganisation of archives, but also to their very production.

In many archives, tagging is understood as a pragmatic undertaking which must be done quickly. Even though examples of well-crafted and carefully considered tagging do exist, these considerations are inaccessible to users, who are thus excluded from participation in a more complex mode of engagement with the labelling process itself. In a video made by the artist Gitte Villesen on the occasion of the exhibition *Auschwitz-Prozess 4 Ks 2 / 63* in Frankfurt am Main in 2004, excerpts are shown of interviews she conducted with six archive workers in the Fritz Bauer Institute. One of them, Tanja Müller, who was responsible for the tagging of the audio tapes of the Auschwitz process for a DVD publication, comments on the problems of the undertaking:

Maybe I can tell a little bit about the difficulties that I had with the index in the beginning. That first I had to understand how the trial functioned in order to grasp the context of a text. And concerning the gigantic amount of material, I was always afraid something might slip through my fingers. I wouldn't be able to find a reference or make it impossible to find it, and what was most difficult for me was that the index is such a purely objective (*sachliche, neutrale*) form of representing the text [was hard to evaluate].

To evaluate means to make a "valuation." For example, to annotate, "Here, someone lies." You cannot find that in an index. If a woman, who has deliberately worked in Auschwitz, Charlotte Bartsch, says, "I don't know what selection is," even though she worked in Auschwitz for three years, then I can only, if I index, index "selection." Additionally, I cannot index the commentary, "Here the woman is lying," for example. That was very complicated. That presented a lot of difficulties for me to figure out how I could represent such a situation.

What I find difficult very often here is to find the right figure of speech. (*Sprachebene*). Most terms are the terms of the perpetrator. It is very complicated to get out of that. A fact is being described in a certain way, for example, "the first gassing." In literature and in the trial, the first gassing was already named, "test gassing." That also is a term that will appear in our index. And my feeling is, that I find that it wasn't a test gassing. People were gassed. Here, 800 people were killed and it was in block 11, in the cellar. It simply is very difficult to grasp in terms, if one says "first gassing," one has to explain what one means by it, that one means Auschwitz, this specific gassing. With test gassing, just the terminus technicus, it is clear, what is meant by it. But I find it to be such an affirmative term, and I feel that way about various terms. It simply is very difficult, what to include in the index and in what way. And

for many terms no solution exists yet and you have to comment on that as well, that no other terms exist for it . . . that at present we can only work with these.²⁶

Villesen's video shows how things which can hardly be expressed within the rules of the archive, such as when someone is lying, can be acknowledged and spoken of. In focusing on the process of tagging instead of its outcome, we see the difficulties and limits that the archive worker's modes are subject to, and we grasp the questions that reside in the translation of spoken language into keywords and terms. Looking at the video, we rediscover the archive and see the material it holds in a different way. Thus the neutrality and objectiveness that Müller talks about becomes more evident as struggle rather than rules. "It is not the same thing," says Müller about the conversion she conducts. "We translate. We interpret what we hear."

Could we consider the image archive in such a way? Could we acknowledge that every search for an objectiveness within this translation is a struggle which might fail time and again? And if we could, how could we make this struggle accessible and readable, and if necessary also change the rules or comment upon them? If language accompanies images and relates them to each other; if the work of the spy and the counter spy, the medium of the image, and the medium of language always work cooperatively; if the personal custody of the boy's image leaves the father's pocket and travels somewhere else, then how do we enable and disable the relationships and transformations that the image is put through?

Sekula has shown that the image archive is rooted in the police filing systems and that its practices still relate to those of the library. Yet is it really necessary for archival practice to remain there? How could newly acquired knowledge of production processes, of contexts, and of relations enter the archive? How could they accompany images from the moment they are acquired by, or produced into, the archive?

Müller's struggle lies in the archive's mandate that she repeat the language of the perpetrator, but she does not succeed in finding a language capable of creating another mode while at the same time remaining true to the archive's rules or legible within its conventions of reading. Berger and Said struggled to keep their

²⁶ Gitte Villesen, *authentic. objective. subjective. Or which rules does one follow?* (2004), Video, 40 minutes.

collaboration going in the exhibition format and eventually shifted their work to another place. In most instances, Lange failed to include her working method in the archives that hold her work, and the reconstruction of her process had to be done much later outside the archives. Goldblatt left certain contexts altogether because his images were handled there as individual entities, and he thereafter became an author in his own right.

Images are fragments. Our reading of them relies largely on context. The way archives file images as individual entities cuts off relations to actual, more complex modes of production, context, and circulation. Although these relations hold the questionable promise that photography represents reality, in cutting them off, archives run the danger of erasing the very basis of their existence.

The development of another mode of working with images in archives might not be possible through a mere proposal for a general procedure. Perhaps one must relate to images' specificities and develop working methods in accordance with their demands. What W.J.T. Mitchell has written regarding the impossibility of producing a general theory of the relation between images and language is perhaps true for the archive as well. He writes, "My aim has not been to produce a 'picture theory' (much less a theory of pictures), but *to picture theory* as a practical activity in the formation of representations. I have not wanted to settle the question of what pictures are, how they relate to words, and why the relationship matters. I've been interested in showing how the received answers to these questions work in practice and why settled answers of a systematic kind may be impossible. This may well be an introduction to a discipline (the general study of representation) that does not exist and never will. If its only accomplishment is a dedisciplinary exercise to make the segregation of the disciplines more difficult, that will be enough."²⁷

²⁷ W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 6–7.

Unfinished Business

Lewis Hine's Mine Photographs and Some Questions about Documentary Photography

On the occasion of working around an exhibition on ghosts with some colleagues and friends, we started to consider questions of invisibility and absence. Our discussions circled back to the same questions time and again: How do we describe the ghostly? How can we contain something in language that is only latently present? And how do we establish contact with it—do we seek it out or does it come to us unexpectedly? Is there a relationship between the ghostly and something present but not necessarily visible? What part do we play as visual artists who produce images and collect information? How can we move between what we make visible and what remains concealed? As soon as we thought we were becoming more concrete, getting closer to a clear articulation, we'd begin to stammer—the subject eluded us, then disappeared. We realized that “speaking with” had to take the place of “speaking about.” We had to find ways to communicate with something which was present but not active, not visible, and almost impossible to put into words.

My own interests closed in on instances of the uncanny, moments in which things surface in such a way that they break through our perception of space and time. Photography is often the medium that establishes contact, manages the interruption of a here and now, and offers a glimpse of a presence that might not otherwise be perceptible. Photography's hold on the uncanny is its ability to freeze an instant, pack it in a medium, and convey it through time and space. It has the dual aspect of representing something real, of being an imprint of reality while at the same time standing very distant from it. It stands still, freezes something, renders currents and facial expressions fixed. Through photography it seems possible to come into contact with something—something that when re-presented in the here and now can unleash activity and speak to us.

A literal translation of *unheimlich*, the German word for uncanny, reads “not of the home.” It further underscores this question of transit. Why do some images travel across time when others remain rooted and mute? Is it the photographer who teaches an image to speak by speaking with it himself? To what extent is it the frame

that makes space for the enunciation? Or is it a medium whose very nature is to travel and multiply and as such can never really be at home? An understanding of documentary photography hinges on these questions—in terms of the existing archive as well as the production of new work.

My attention turned to the work of Lewis Hine (1874–1940). As an example of a practitioner of early documentary photography, Hine was directly engaged in the political discourses of his time and was also conscious of the medium’s aesthetic value. Hine was always keenly aware of how his work was read and was very engaged in its organisation and presentation. Today his photographs are filed in numerous archives so that the context and interpretation of the pictures and photographic series are constantly shifting. This is especially true of the work he did documenting the conditions of child labor throughout the United States.

In Butler, Pennsylvania, not far from where Hine captured some of his most resonant child labor images, is one of the largest underground archives in the world today. In the depths of a former limestone mine reside many images by Hine, including some from the child labor series. Once a site of manual labor and industrial production, today a storehouse for our culture’s artifacts, the mine is my point of departure in an attempt to know better the ghosts we’ve inherited.

1

Lewis Hine and his work for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) in the United States constitute an extraordinary document of an era in which ideas about enlightenment were tied to the praxis of photography. The NCLC was founded by progressive citizens and politicians in 1904 to launch a public campaign against child labor practices. Although laws prohibiting child labor had existed in many states since as early as 1830, the situation in 1900 had hardly changed. It was common in mines, textile mills, factories, and agriculture that menial tasks, or those that required greater dexterity and small hands, were filled by children. The self-proclaimed mission of the NCLC was to raise public awareness about the children’s situations and through this awareness to pressure the state into enforcing or tightening the laws.



Hine was trained as an educator and first developed an interest in photography as an educational tool while teaching at the Ethical Culture School in New York. In 1907, having decided on a career in sociological photography, he began graduate studies in sociology. That same year he received his first major commission from the Pittsburgh Survey and shortly thereafter began work with the NCLC. For the next several years, on salary with the NCLC, he traveled extensively, documenting the conditions and circumstances under which children were working. Usually under cover, he snuck into worksites disguised as a salesman and visited during lunch breaks or in the evening. His assignment was not limited to photographing the children—the committee also needed information about the child laborers, the kinds of work they performed, and the ways work was executed. Hine photographed and accumulated data, produced individual images and put together collections, designed exhibitions and worked on diagrams and collages. The facts and photographs he collected bolstered important arguments in the battles waged by the reform movement. He was incessantly involved, assembling facts and photographs, organising exhibitions and discussing his work with the members of the NCLC.



In January 1911, on assignment for the NCLC, Hine photographed a mine in Pittston, Pennsylvania. The pictures that he made there over the course of two days focus on a boy named Angelo Ross. There are several images of Ross. Hine first photographed him among a larger group of boys working in the coal breaker, then as part of a smaller group, then another even smaller group, and then twice alone—a full-body portrait and a portrait. In the picture taken in the breaker, it is dark. Almost fifty boys peer into the camera, their individual faces barely discernible. In the second photograph there are fewer boys. The picture was taken outside, and the soot-smearred faces emerge as individuals—Angelo Ross stares grimly and perhaps also somewhat sceptically at the photographer. His cap is pulled low over his brow and his face is very dirty. The boy either washed up for the portraits or Hine made them the next day before work. He is also wearing a different sweater and a different jacket, his expression is more open, his brow is relaxed. He stands alone in a large, empty lot and looks directly into the camera. In the distant background there are industrial buildings, probably part of the mine, perhaps workers' housing or management offices.



The pictures were not presented as a series—every publication used a different arrangement or simply individual images. But the series reveals how Hine worked, how he approached the children, and even suggests how much time he needed to make such an exchange possible. Looking at the pictures, it is not apparent that he made them without permission. One senses nothing of how difficult it must have been for Hine to be in those locations, and nothing of the danger he faced if caught. The strength of the images comes from Hine’s intimate connection with his young subjects, who appear calm and tend to look directly at the camera. They seem to trust him. They form a group, a circle of peers in communication with the photographer. He uses the gaze to foster communication between the observer and the children. He grants the observer access to an experience and strives to develop a visual language that enlists a participatory seeing. The presentation seeks out a voice in the imagination of the observer, a voice in dialog. Not something factual out there, but rather visual facts, through images of others, that awaken a consciousness and empathy within the observer.



This was during a time when the perception of social work in the United States was changing.⁴⁹ Moving away from nineteenth-century notions of charity, the reform community initiated new systems based on political work and education. Drawing on established notions of scientific enlightenment, these systems developed into what we know as the scientific objectification of social data. Particularly in the work that Paul Kellogg organised for the Pittsburgh Survey⁵⁰ between 1907 and 1908 with Hine as the main photographer, methods were developed for the scientific investigation of social problems in which photography served as factual proof of collected data. Hine believed that facts alone could not convey the entire story, that facts alone don't make a story out of details, and that the distribution of facts is not enough to prompt a social act. He possessed a special relationship to the people he photographed and wanted the observer to take part in his experience. In the early

⁴⁹ For more about changes in the understanding of social work, see Allan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989); and Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁵⁰ The Pittsburgh Survey (1907–08) was a sociological study of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, initiated by the Sage Foundation in New York. It is one of the earliest and most exact descriptions of urban living conditions in the United States. Over seventy people worked on it. The director of the study, Paul Kellogg, attempted to connect reform principles with scientific, sociological investigation. Hine was



twentieth century, with the advent of a social science whose goal it was to objectify social reality, Hine firmly maintained that alongside this objectification and abstraction of data was the necessity for direct contact with the photographic subject. He insisted that within the idea and the praxis of enlightenment there remained something that was not expressed through objectification and factuality, and that something was not to be forgotten.

There has been much debate over the efficacy of documentary photography. Martha Rosler's critique of humanitarian photography is one the most severe to be leveled by a photographer: "As this early history [of American social documentary photography] suggests, documentary engages with structural injustices, often to provoke active responses. Much of its appeal stems from what might be called the physiognomic fallacy: the identification of the image of a face with character, a body centered essentialism."⁵¹ In other places, she writes that photography has never been

the main photographer for the survey. For more on the subject see Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life* (note 1).

⁵¹ Martha Rosler, "Post-Documentary, Post-Photography," in *decoys + disruptions* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 221.



revolutionary. She argues that “documentary photography has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or program of revolutionary politics.”⁵²

But something remains: In the photographs of Ross, we witness the evolution of a relationship. Slowly, from picture to picture, over two days’ time, a young boy whom we initially don’t recognize becomes Angelo Ross. His gaze does not beg for help. In opposition to the pointed criticism of Martha Rosler and others who would dismiss the reform-oriented context of the pictures stands a boy whose expression

⁵² The entire quote reads: “Documentary photography has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or program of revolutionary politics. . . . Yet the force of documentary surely derives in part from the fact that the images might be more decisively unsettling than the arguments enveloping them. Arguments for reform—threatening to the social order as they might seem to the unconvinced—must have come as a relief from the *potential* arguments embedded in the images: With the manifold possibilities for radical demands that photos of poverty and degradation suggest, any coherent argument for reform is ultimately both polite and negotiable. Odious, perhaps, but manageable; it is, after all, social *discourse*. As such, these arguments were surrounded and institutionalized into the very structures of government; the newly created institutions, however, began to prove their inadequacy—even to their own limited purpose—almost as soon as they were erected.” Martha Rosler, “In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography),” originally appeared in *Martha Rosler: 3 Works* (Halifax: The press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1981). Reprinted in Richard Bolton, (ed.), *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

does not call for social consciousness, but rather for a dialog of sociality. For me, the image is not a simplified provocation to identify with the “other” as victim; instead it allows something to shine through. Something that is not there to be re-presented, but is present in its absence.

2

In 1982, Rosalind Krauss published an essay entitled “Photography’s Discursive Spaces” in which she examines the problem of the photographic archive and “aesthetically derived categories” in relation to nineteenth-century photography, particularly in the work of Timothy O’Sullivan and Eugene Atget.⁵³ Reading pairs of images by each photographer, she demonstrates how within the space of the museum, aesthetic categories like authorship and genre are privileged—obscuring, among other things, the conditions of production and the photographers’ actual motivations.⁵⁴

While Krauss’ critique focuses primarily on the museum and the archive, similar problems arise with the implementation of digital technology. It is most evident within individual archives themselves, as they are literally re-ordered and re-categorised for digital storage and circulation. Since the 1990s, when analog picture archives began transitioning to digital databanks, the sorting and accessibility of images has been turned upside down. Images were newly sorted and classified.

The search engines, which are designed to locate a specific image, vary: one can search by photographer, location, search word, series, date, or producer. Stock agencies tend to use search engines that rely on keywords, which treat all images according to the same search criteria regardless of their original context. They break down collections into individual images, changing the approach and access to images and thereby altering their legibility. Information about production, sequels, series, and titles is included only in the rarest instances. A particularly extreme example of this re/writing is the picture stock of Corbis, which has expanded very rapidly,

⁵³ Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces,” *Art Journal*, 42 (1982).

⁵⁴ Krauss describes two reproductions by Timothy O’Sullivan from the same negative of Tufa Domes, Pyramid Lake, Nevada. One is a photographic print from 1868, the other a lithograph from 1878, which was produced for *Systematic Geology*, a publication of the engineering department of the US Army. Pointing to the reproductions, which emphasise different elements in the image, she shows that they operate in two different discursive spaces, whereby the first is more easily conferred as art.



ingesting countless historical archives into the categories of its search engines. This bulk organisation of images according to a verbal logic produces a complete fact machine—a machine that can take in all the images and streamline them according to a single logic. It suggests that all the images in the world stand always and everywhere at our service, ready for us to consume.⁵⁵

An examination of the archives containing Hine’s Pennsylvania photographs for the NCLC reveals significant differences in the handling and sorting of image

⁵⁵ Avery Gordon describes this phenomenon with the term “hypervisibility”: “Hypervisibility is a kind of obscenity of accuracy that abolishes the distinction between ‘permission and prohibition, presence and absence.’ No shadows, no ghosts. In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe not only that everything can be seen, but also that everything is available and accessible for our consumption. In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe that neither repression nor the return of the repressed, in the form of either improperly buried bodies or countervailing systems of value or difference, occurs with any meaningful result.” Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 16.

collections.⁵⁶ Practices range from presentation of an isolated picture to attempts to convey the historical context and background of a given image. Hine's images were made in 1911 and are legally considered press photography. According to today's international laws, they are protected by copyright for fifty years from the date of first publication. After the copyright expires on an image, it becomes public domain—anyone can use Hine's images at this point, even for commercial purposes. The images that were originally filed in the NCLC⁵⁷ archive can be called up in numerous public and commercial picture archives today—copies have multiplied and surface in many locations.

Among the public archives that hold the most comprehensive collections of Hine's images are the Library of Congress in Washington DC,⁵⁸ the National Archives in Maryland,⁵⁹ and the Albin O. Kuhn Library at the University of Maryland.⁶⁰ While the National Archives organise the collection according to Hine's original system in its library catalog, and the Library of Congress provides high-resolution files online, the University of Maryland is the only library to present Hine's original working methods in digital format. They sort their online catalog according to the locations that he visited and order the images with consecutive

⁵⁶ The Index to American Photographic Collections lists more than 120 institutions that have reported holdings of Lewis Hine materials.

⁵⁷ Today, the NCLC still exists and is engaged in improving the condition of children in the United States. They still hold some negatives of Hine's photographs, but they sold the original prints in the 1970s. For more about the NCLC today, see <<http://www.kapow.org/nclc.htm>>. Accessed January 10, 2009.

⁵⁸ The Library of Congress offers the most complex search engine of any picture archive that makes its collection accessible online. It is one of the rare examples of a search engine without a tree structure. For more, see <<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html>>. Accessed January 11, 2009. The Hine collection at the Library of Congress consists of more than 5,100 photographic prints and 355 glass negatives given to the Library of Congress, along with the NCLC records, in 1954 by Mrs. Gertrude Folks Zimand, acting for the NCLC in her capacity as chief executive, in celebration of the NCLC's fiftieth anniversary. The NCLC delivered the collection to the Library of Congress in albums organised by type of industry and, within that, by Hine numbers. The NCLC apparently also offered the Library of Congress a file of nitrate negatives, which the Library did not accept. Some original negatives can be found at the University of Maryland and the International Museum of Photography and Film at the George Eastman House. In 1968, Library staff remounted the photographs in new albums and subsequently microfilmed the collection. The entire collection was digitized in 2003.

⁵⁹ The National Archives in Maryland are a branch office of the US government archives (NARA). They hold documents and materials which have been created in the course of business conducted by the US federal government. NARA received Hine's images automatically from the Department of Commerce, which incorporated the NCLC in 1907. For more, see <<http://www.archives.gov>>. Accessed January 11, 2009.

⁶⁰ The Albin O. Kuhn Library at the University of Maryland acquired their Hine photos in 1975, when they supposedly bought 5,400 prints and negatives from the NCLC. For more, see <http://www.umbc.edu/aok/main/index.html>. Accessed February 20, 2011.

numbers and search words. It is the only archive that presents both sides of the photographs, revealing Hine's practice of captioning his work.

A search for "Hine" in Getty Images⁶¹ returns an image from the Massachusetts Labor Committee that exemplifies a layout technique that Hine sometimes employed. In a call to arms, the group portrait of children was inset in a collage that solicited the reader to "support the labor movement." Here the image is an illustration, inserted as factual evidence, receding behind the clear, political summons. It is the only image I have found in an online database that includes the elements of collage that were originally used. Added to the montage is a Getty watermark that cuts across the image and only disappears after one pays the calculated usage fee.

A search in Corbis⁶² returns an image embedded in a data sheet outlining rights and usage fees. There is no trace of the original reform context to frame a clear reading of the photographs, only a Corbis watermark.

The shifting legibility of an image through different discursive spaces, as described by Krauss, also occurs in the re/writing of digitized databanks. But there is more here than questions about historically correct interpretation. Looking at Hine's images in the different databanks, something happens that points beyond the system of classification. The children staring us in the eye speak in the here and now, very directly. We know nothing of what became of them, and we have no information as to whether the photography changed anything in their lives. We know just a few names, and we can only speculate as to their occupations later in life. What we know for sure is that none of those children are still living today.

⁶¹ Getty Images is a commercial stock agency founded by Paul Getty in the 1990's. For more, see www.gettyimages.com. Accessed January 15, 2009.

⁶² Corbis is a commercial stock agency founded by Bill Gates in the 1990s. Originally based on the idea to create a virtual museum, Corbis started its business by buying the digital picture rights of art pieces from many museums worldwide. Today, its main business relies on advertisement photography and picture stocks. With the Bettman Collection, Corbis has bought an important historical press archive. Corbis and Getty Images are the two largest image banks in the world today. Over the past ten years both have been acquiring other agencies and archives in aggressive competition with each other's stock. For more, see www.corbis.com. Accessed January 20, 2009.

3

The photographs of breaker boys that we can call up in commercial search engines involve many parties—the boys who were photographed, the photographer, the original commission, and a commercial stock agency. Who has authority over these images—who possesses the moral right and who the material right? Who determines the context in which they appear, who works on their interpretation, and who earns money from them?

“Does an image that depicts something belonging to everyone belong to all?”⁶³ The French court of law grappled with this same question in the mid-nineteenth century and over the course of the proceedings issued a resounding no. They ruled that photography is the singular expression of an individual and not a mere copy of reality. The decision altered the status of photography and laid the foundation for the emergence of the picture industry. It defined photography as the property of the creator. Under the economic pressures of the photo industry, which quickly became a critical sector of capitalist production, the soulless machine was transformed into an instrument that could assist in the creative expression of a subject.⁶⁴ The question as to whether a photograph represented more than reality was answered almost immediately by the industry, enabling the far-reaching expansion of a market.

Debates continue today surrounding rights in and around photography. The arguments date back to a confrontation between two legal systems: author rights, which originated in France, and copyright, which emerged in England. Debates turn on the question of who owns the primary rights to a production: is it an author/photographer or a publisher/producer? Negotiations continue toward an international standard that would stand somewhere between the two systems.⁶⁵ But at

⁶³ The question is quickly complicated in situations in which an image depicts things that are not common property. Today we find ourselves in intricate negotiations about the personal rights of someone who appears in a photograph, who materially owns something that is depicted, or who has intellectual rights to something depicted.

⁶⁴ See John Tagg, “The Photograph as Property in Law” in *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

⁶⁵ See, for example, TRIPS (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) (1994). TRIPS is an international treaty administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO) which sets down minimum standards for most forms of intellectual property regulation within all WTO member countries. See also WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) (1996). WIPO is one of the specialised agencies of the United Nations. It was created in 1967 with the stated purpose of encouraging creative activity and promoting the protection of intellectual property throughout the world.

the same time, the image market is developing practices and standards that sometimes disregard copyright entirely, setting up a parallel set of precedents. With the massive production of images and their numerous producers, questions about distribution and disbursement or whether to participate in the market at all have become increasingly pressing. Individual, independent producers face difficulties surviving in the expanded market. Huge agencies and stock archives take over small production companies and dictate terms to the photographers. That the rights accompanying images expire in fifty or seventy years plays to the advantage of the producers and distributors more often than to the photographers. Long-term economic gains go to the photographer only in the rarest cases.

Most copyright debates revolve around image rights and economic profit pertaining to an individual image. But a photograph is never an isolated unit in terms of meaning. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding what the legal system calls “moral rights” which relate to how and where an image is utilized and with what intentions⁶⁶—for example, the use of a historical photograph to advertise a product.⁶⁷ This reaches beyond the legal question of “material expression” of an idea, which would be the photograph itself, to larger questions about appropriation and connotation. Moral rights always return to a consideration of meaning, interpretation, and intention. Allan Sekula describes this convergent nature of the medium: “Photographic meaning is always hybrid construction, the outcome of an interplay of iconic, graphic, and narrative conventions The photograph is invariably accompanied by, and situated within, an overt or covert text. Even at the level of the artificially ‘isolated’ image, photographic signification is exercised in terms of pictorial conventions that are never ‘purely’ photographic.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ A contemporary example of a breach of moral copyright is the case of the film *The Raspberry Reich* by Bruce LaBruce. It was banned as of August 23, 2006, by a ruling of the higher courts in Paris. Additionally, the producer of the film, Jürgen Brüning, faces fines for breach of copyright and brand infringement. Patrick Magaud and Diana Evangelina Dia Lopez—the daughter of the photographer, Alberto Korda—filed the suit. Korda, who died in 2001, made the famous portrait of Che Guevara that was used on the poster promoting “The Raspberry Reich”. In addition to the poster, Korda’s estate objected to scenes within the movie.

⁶⁷ Earlier Korda himself had instigated a legal fight with a vodka company that used his Che Guevara picture.

4

Hine's photographs are documents of an attempt to supply the reform movement with more than mere facts. He tried to approach something that was not easily articulated or even comprehended. What reaches us through the children's gaze is the experience of a merciless moment in our history. The gaze from within a photograph bridges the temporal distance, insisting on an uncanny acceptance of the fact that we cannot separate ourselves from this moment. It is remarkable from today's perspective that the presentation of the photographs—whether determined by Hine, the NCLC, the Massachusetts Labor Committee, or within internet pages like those of Corbis or the Library of Congress—that have the most startling and direct effect are those which do not also include the original framework of the reform movement. The summonses, classifications, and slogans from the past speak too clearly about a specific moment. Ironically, it might be the Corbis pages, entirely ahistorical and de-contextualized, that provide the framework that best activates the images.

The questioning of interpretive control over one's pictures is ongoing and is central to debates within contemporary photography. Outlining her own position in an article published in 1991, Abigail Solomon-Godeau writes that the renewal of documentary photography is not predicated only on "a full awareness of the role played by context, subject/object relations, and the various structuring mechanisms that determine photographic meaning"; rethinking documentary in a rigorous and serious way also "includes an insistence on maintaining control over the work in terms of exhibition, publication, or distribution."⁶⁹

Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula have been working with questions of meaning and interpretation around photography since the 70s. Both take up Hine's work in their texts and refer to the history of documentary photography in developing their own ideas about a "radical documentary praxis." In their projects they attempt to rework the question of the documentary. Sekula does it through a careful orchestration of space in and around his photo series. Images don't stand alone and text is often an element that surrounds the series. He takes control not only

⁶⁸ Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh et. al., (eds.), *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers* (Halifax Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983).

⁶⁹ Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Who is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography," in Abigail Solomon Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essay on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 169–183.

of the individual images but also of the framing and thereby the entire installation. In 1975–76, Martha Rosler issued a critique of social documentary photography in conjunction with her refusal to photograph poverty and suffering. This led to her work “The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems”—an image-text collage about the Bowery in lower Manhattan and its castoff population. In it she combines black and white photographs of building entrances and traces of destitute Bowery street life with words associated with drunkenness—dead soldiers, bloom nose, boozier, derelict, muddled, flooey, maudlin. The work stems from a point in the development of her artistic praxis when she was investigating new forms and practices of representation. This search yielded not only the image-text collage but also related texts. In her later work, Rosler seldom engages this discourse so explicitly. It is difficult to trace her ideas about representation without her now classic text “In, Around, and Afterthoughts: On Documentary Photography” in which she outlined her approach to the Bowery project. In more recent work, the photographs are set in rows or stacked one behind another and are almost illegible without prior knowledge of her theoretical positions.⁷⁰ The text is extracted from the process and becomes part of the catalogs and lectures tied to the work’s presentation. Work about the sphere of photographic production rarely occurs within photography itself.

Questions of interpretation were always important to Hine—they were an integral part of his process and intentions. I find it interesting that although much of his conscious framing did not hold up, something in the images still speaks across the incidental frames in which they’ve landed. An examination of Hine’s photographs as they are presented in different archives proves not only how strongly influenced they are by their framing, but that they also possess a store of activity with the potential to influence their context. Looking out from the center of the Corbis web-page listing image sizes, usage fees, and copyright, a group of children stares us directly in the eye. An image depicting children for sale amidst a sales sheet from Corbis elicits an uneasy feeling. Would they have been happy to appear on this page? What role does the photographer play as mediator between them and us, between the NCLC and the stock agency? Emerging from the logic of the bulk administration of images, through

⁷⁰ See, for example, the exhibition catalogue: Martha Rosler, *passionate signals* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz/Sprengel Museum Hannover, 2005).

sheer coincidence, is a glimmer of photography's uncanny capacity to travel through time and space. It is not so much about the control or truth value of an image, but about a potential activation of images that must be carried out over and over again. It is not about deciphering Angelo Ross's true story or determining which interpretation is correct, but rather which tools serve us in activating that which still involves us today. In every conscientious photography project there is a remainder, an in-between space that cannot be explained, like a shadow, offering something from beyond and speaking without words.



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Youthful Mining Crew

Grimy young men and boys pause in their work at the Pennsylvania Coal Company's mine in South Pittston. Many of these boys are no more than ten years old, and some are even younger.

Bild: © CORBIS

Fotograf: [Lewis Wickes Hine](#)Fotografiert am: [January 1911](#)Ortsinformationen: [Pennsylvania Coal Company mine, South Pittston, Pennsylvania, USA](#)[Verzichtserklärung](#)[Bild-Feedback](#)**Preise**[Zurück zum Anfang](#)Bei diesem Bild handelt es sich um [lizenzpflichtiges Bildmaterial](#).
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Modellfreigabe: Nicht vorhanden
Eigentumsfreigabe: Nicht vorhanden

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[Zurück zum Anfang](#)

5

Sometimes it is as if traveling images achieve a spatial fluidity in which the place itself, its local terms and conditions are transported into another dimension—the images link up to new contexts and frozen subjectivities are liberated. Sometimes it is as if places themselves are liberated from categories of knowledge, unmooring assumptions so that meaning can move across a range of connections, descriptions, and networks.

Sometimes a place is reunited with traveling images—the interconnections invite the temporal, reincarnating previous relationships. Hine's images for the NCLC lead us to an underground archive that Corbis uses in northwestern Pennsylvania.⁷¹ The archive is not far from Pittston where Hine photographed the breaker boys in 1911. The location was first mined for limestone about a hundred years ago—a remnant of the hard, manual labor that shaped Pennsylvania during the industrial period. Today the cool, dry mine shafts house one of the largest underground archives in the world and more people work there today than did then. There are almost three hundred miles of potential archive space, thirty of which are now in operation, occupied by various firms and institutions. Its contents include the government archives of the Department of Defense and a storage space for the Social Security data of all US citizens as well as the data, films, and documents of many commercial institutions like Disney and MGM. Through the holdings of the Corbis archive, it is also home to Angelo Ross. Regarding questions of production today, this location is as relevant for me as the images themselves.

To travel to Pennsylvania almost one hundred years later with Hine's photographs and to search out the places they were made is like traveling through time, although there is little to see of the landscape's previous history—it has outlived its material traces. But on returning to their initial site of production, Hine's photographs enter into conversation with this absence in the landscape.

⁷¹ Due to the large number of requests for Hine's work and the relation of the NCLC to several federal government institutions, the Committee made the images and series available through several public archives including the Albin O' Kuhn Library, the Library of Congress in Washington DC and the NARA Archives in Maryland, among others. Because most public libraries offer the images for the cost of reproduction and make no differentiation between private or commercial usage, many of the images have found their way into commercial archives. The commercial archives retrieve them from

A landscape and a face...

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, in a section called “Year Zero: Faciality,” Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe the face as an “abstract machine” of white walls and black holes. “Signification is never without a white wall upon which it inscribes its signs and redundancies. Subjectification is never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion and redundancies.”⁷² A machine of normality, always classifying aberrations and cataloging them in its gridding, it is constantly at work, comparing and ordering faces according to the norm in ever expanding and contracting categories. Racism, for example, begins the moment something is given a face. It is not a problem of identifying something as “other,” but rather a constant assessment of the degree of aberration from the norm-face—the face of a white, European man. Depending on this evaluation, one accepts him or her in his or her “ghetto” or wipes them from the wall. The abstract machine of faces produces norm-faces, *limit-faces* and those that fall through the gridding. Hine’s pictures of Angelo Ross are photographs of limit-faces. Individuals on the margins of society, invisible to most, to whom Hine gives a face. Through the campaign of the NCLC, he tried to secure a level of public identification with the children. If an observer could identify with the children, could see that they were almost like him, then the observer could be urged to act.

In Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the abstract machine, faces do not function individually. They exist because there must be a face—in the close-up in movies, in the face of the leader in politics, but also in painting, in architecture, in literature. They exist because specific arrangements of power have the desire to produce a face. What counts is not the individuality of faces, but rather the potency of encryption that it enables in some instances. In Hine’s breaker series in Pittston there is only one image that renounces the face in its portrayal and formal treatment. It is the image of the boys in a breaker—probably one of the first pictures that Hine made and the only one in the series that abandons the frontal view. The dynamic

the public sources and sell them. Many of them, like Corbis and Getty Images, implement a watermark, copyrighting the scan they made.

⁷² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 167.

space of the breaker becomes more important than the portrayal of a person and the exchange of gazes. It is the only depiction of the children working and the only view from behind. All other images in the series arrange the children frontally, and they look directly in the camera. This series has the effect of a camera-tracking that moves in on a single image to culminate in a close-up.

And a landscape is like a face...

For Deleuze and Guattari the face is like a landscape—both are pervaded by the same logic of the white wall and the black holes. There is an alternating relationship of exchange between them; and in both, the machine of significance and subjectification is at work. Considering photographs by Timothy O’Sullivan, Krauss describes the change in relation between nature and the observer.⁷³ Pointing to evolving modes of perception and categorisations of subjectivity, she traces the shift from “view” to “landscape” as a description of O’Sullivan’s work. In his own notes O’Sullivan always used the term “view”—implying that he was an observer of a natural phenomenon and not the author of a picture. The view offered itself and he secured it. As the work was ushered into the museum, a space that requires an author, it became increasingly more common to see the term landscape applied. The notion of landscape emerges as the observer becomes an author. Nature becomes a terrain for processes of construction and subjectification and, ultimately, the humanisation of the natural world.

A landscape is like a face...⁷⁴

How can one elude this abstract machine that is now at work in the landscape as well? Is it possible to become faceless? For Deleuze and Guattari there is no turning back, no possibility of reinventing oneself without a face. The only possibility is to create the face and the landscape anew and to find, in terms of an instrument, another

⁷³ Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces,” *Art Journal*, 42 (1982).

⁷⁴ The sentence “A landscape is like a face” appears like a red flag throughout Godard’s film “Two or Three Things I Know About Her” (1967). It appears in the film as an inner monologue of the film’s main character, Juliette, as description of her search for congruence, for a “being one with the world,” which continuously fails.

utilisation for them. Perhaps there is an opening in the landscape today to do exactly that. Former categories of observation no longer function; there is a dissolution in the process, and the terms we have applied to them no longer fit. Former industrial areas become vast leftover places. Efforts to restructure them through development, re-naturalisation or re-utilisation are extensive, but the effects are nominal. They can be understood as an attempt to reinscribe the landscape, drawing it a new face. Post-industrial landscapes have fallen outside the gridding and become ghostly terrain. How we address them today and in the future is also a question of consorting with the abstract machine. Perhaps the ghost itself has already offered us instruction—the only way to contact them is to speak *with* them.

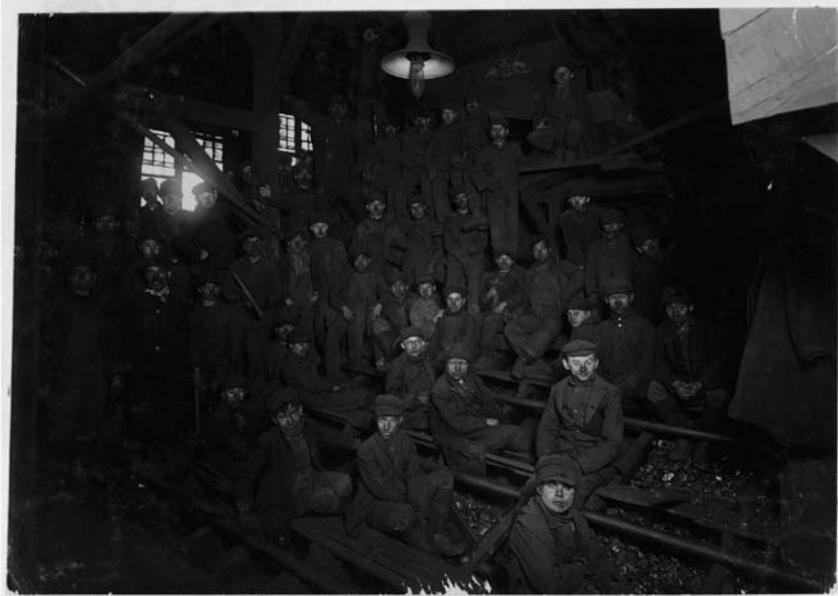
Ines Schaber

picture mining

2006

six photographs by Lewis Hine
landscape photographs
video (14 minutes)
Installation

picture mining is an installation focused on the Corbis archive in Pennsylvania, which hosts, among 70 million other pictures, some of Lewis Hine's images on child labour in Pennsylvania. The voyage that the installation narrates is a field trip to the area where the underground archive is located. The installation combines Hine's photographs, a series of landscape photographs and a video produced in 2006, in which a fictitious lecturer tells a speculative story of the mine and its contemporary usage.



PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE THE WEBSITE OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS IN WASHINGTON D.C.,
FROM A SERIES OF 100 PRINTS BY LEWIS WICKES HINE ENTITLED
„CHILD MINES. CHILD LABOR AT COAL AND ZINE MINES IN THE UNITED STATES.“.





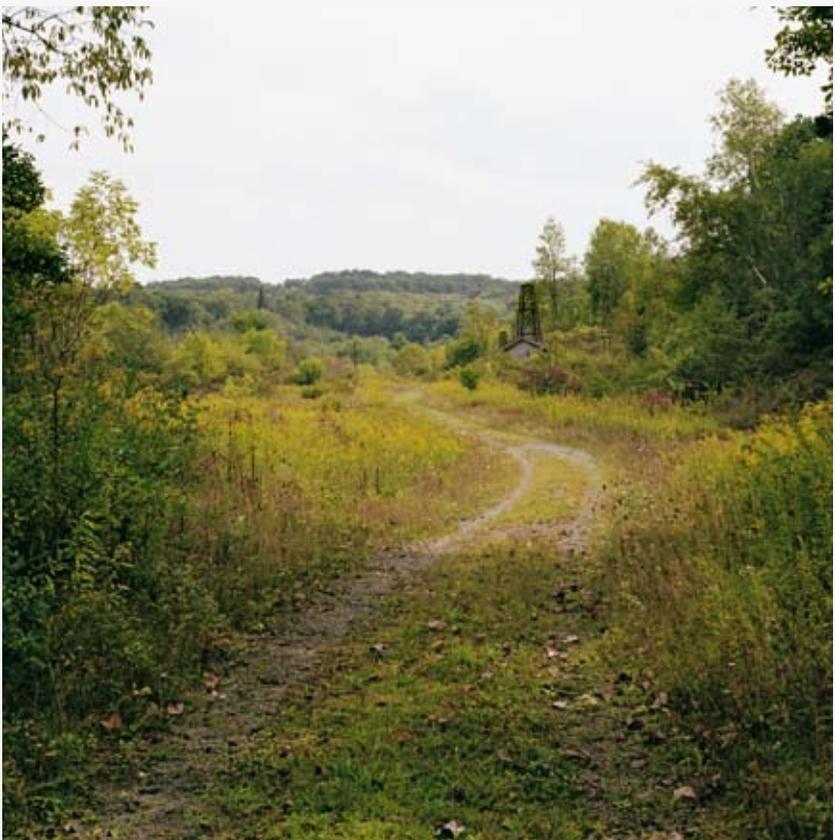
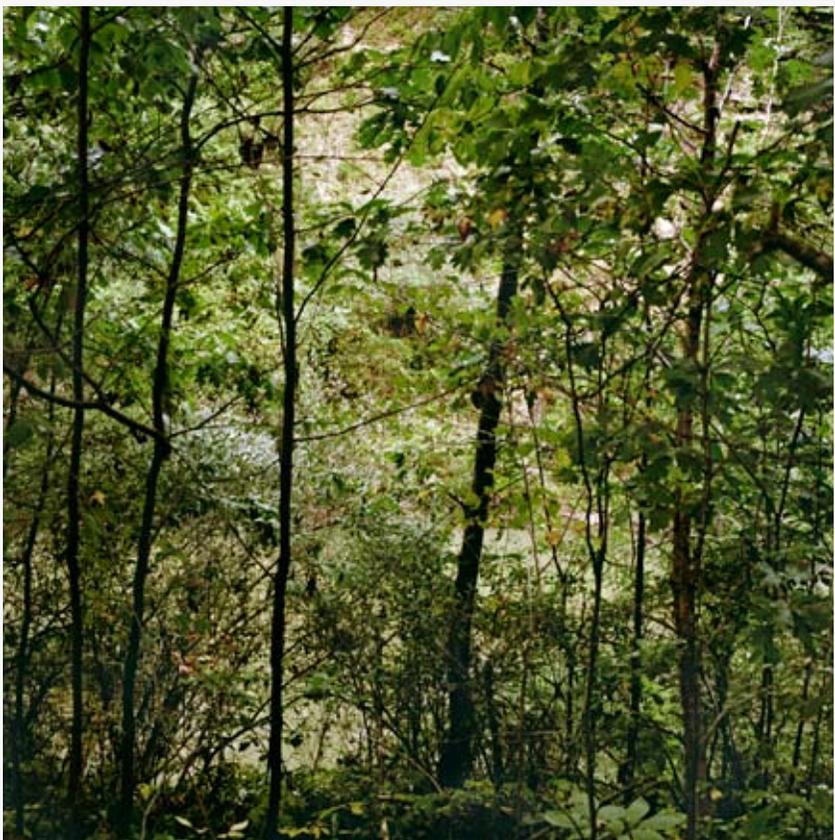


PICTURE MINING. INSTALLATION VIEW KUNSTWERKE BERLIN 2006

THE FOLLOWING PHOTOGRAPHS WERE PHOTOGRAPHED IN 2005 AROUND BOYERS IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, ABOVE THE FORMER LIMESTONE MINE IN WHICH COBRIS NOW KEEPS ITS UNDERGROUND ARCHIVE.











Cabinet 1: Artwork 95









PICTURE MINING. INSTALLATION VIEW KUNSTWERKE BERLIN 2006

A lecture room in Berlin.

The lights go down and a slide projection starts.

The speaker begins to talk out of the dark.



1

The town of Boyers, where we'll be for a while now, looks like this. Actually, this is not Boyers, but the area around. Between the two hills we see on this picture, just behind the trees in the valley, lies Boyers. The picture is pretty representative for

this kind of area, but you can't see a lot on this photograph.

the landscape's beautiful to me – with this kind of subtle picturesque quality, that one wouldn't expect to find here... although this may be due to the way I photographed it.

What you really see on this photograph are some forests on the hills, mowed fields in between and rural flora in the foreground. The goldenrod – the yellow plant – grows on loamy ground, often on former detrital areas. It is a so-called pioneer plant, an in-between vegetation. In this area it grows everywhere, pioneering and preparing the ground for the future.

2

Boyers is a town in Butler County in western Pennsylvania. In the early 20th century its proximity to the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad, which at the time had connected the industries of Pittsburgh with the cities of the Great Lakes, founded its importance. The area had a lot of mineral resources, which were essential for the industries: coal, oil, iron and limestone. There is not a lot left today.

These long endless straight streets cutting through the hills and creeks are typical for this area. They do not conduct you anywhere specifically, but just continue to lead you further. – There are all these seemingly useless structures and they call forth some kind of truth about a time long past.

3

On the left picture you can see today's town center – a lawn. It is accurately trimmed and separated from the street by a beautiful wooden fence. The bush on the right further encloses the place.

...and doesn't the plant give the place a strange appearance? ... somehow it seems to fly... a bush mimicking clouds...

On the right picture is the post office, which was a bank in those days. In its front, the national flag. It is the main building of the town today, although it is only open one afternoon per week. If you look closer, and try hard to follow the street to the right, you can see something that seems to be really important for the villagers: nobody is allowed to stop here.

The whole center of Boyers is so de-differentiated that it is really hard to picture it. I couldn't get a good shot of it. But we shouldn't stop here for too long; we have to go on.

4

Main Street at the corner of Steel Street, just around the corner from the town center. We went on our journey because we had been informed that somewhere here is a huge underground archive which also hosts one of the biggest picture collections in the world: Corbis. At home in Berlin we could see the pictures of the archive online, but it's said that Corbis owns the rights to much more, and I was immediately thrilled to learn that they keep their originals far away, underground. Right here.

The sign in the middle gives us directions. It's the old sign though – the predecessor of today's archive – and it directs us to the United States Steel Annandale Archives. Obviously, these were the archives of the company that used to mine limestone here. The street does not really suggest an archive. It is more that kind of an old workers' town with the headquarters of the company at the head of the street and the houses of the foremen on the sides. Today there is neither U.S. Steel nor any other company still present in the village. The former headquarters houses a hairdresser's salon that can only be visited by appointment. If the hairdresser does your hair, he tells you stories of an Italian village, with gambling places and a cinema. He used to work for U.S. Steel himself as a guard and only became a hairdresser later. He stores his tools in the old vault at the company office, where they used to deposit the weekly payments for the workers. Together with a thrift shop in the center of the town, the salon is the only private enterprise here.

5

Starting from here, the expedition becomes tricky. The area just behind Main Street is private ground. On every other corner stands a sign saying "no trespassing." Walking around between these signs, I am thinking of the photographer Lewis Hine and his photo series for the Child Labor Committee in the 1910s in Pennsylvania. He had to hide or disguise himself in order to take his photographs of children – he had to be invisible; people did not want him to take pictures. They were afraid of any information that could be communicated about the children working. A photographer and a researcher... a spy and a counterspy at the same time. Trying to take photographs here today, we come



upon no people at all. No one, just the hairdresser.

I think these pictures here could very well be in black and white. Definitely the right one could be from the Farm Security Administration Project, the New Deal program by the federal government that produced the iconic pictures of rural areas in the 30s. I guess the building is from that time too; it's abandoned today.

The tree in the left picture irritates me. Its size doesn't fit somehow – it's way too tall in relation to my memory of the photographs of the time that the houses remind me of.

the little shacks baffle me, too. i still cannot imagine what they're possibly made for. they are opening in too many directions. one could be a garage – then again i've never before seen a garage with a lawn entry.

6

Later in the afternoon, within walking distance from Main Street: this is the last stop sign we pass on our way to find the archives. Until the 1950s U.S. Steel mined limestone here for a couple of decades. The Boyers mine was one of the most productive facilities in the area – tons and tons of limestone were mined here. Limestone was necessary for the manufacturing of iron and steel, for the building of railroads and public roads and for making cement. It was this mineral resource that made the area profitable for a whole century only to be abandoned later. The area is still owned by U.S. Steel, but their main business lies elsewhere...

The entire area that we have so far been walking on is tunneled. The underground space must be huge.

It is impossible to envision the logic of the whole place from outside. i'm dying to go underground, into the dark, and get hold of at least some of the place's mysteries.

7

A five minute drive from the center, on the other side of the hill. It is completely forbidden to take a photograph of the underground picture archive on this side of the mountain, but the place where I took the picture from was a convenient spot. I took a picture – and there it is...

although i cannot possibly imagine what one could see on this photograph.

The parking lot is the only visible sign of the presence of people working underground today. In the morning, there are all these cars arriving from both sides of the mountain. People park and then disappear. – It looks like there is a lot of work to be done in the archive underground. I've been told that there are more people working here today than there were then. The limestone workers have built perfect conditions for archiving all sorts of materials, and the vastness of the space can still not be filled.

Hine's pictures are said to be here too. – And they are now part of a picture holding that controls the market – not only around Boyers, but in the whole world. Corbis stores the originals here, while their copies wander around. If you download a photograph from their page on your PC, it has a their watermark inscribed, naming the proprietor of the picture archive here. I assume every fifth image we see comes from here. – What is mined here today are the images of yesterday.

8

there is a discrepancy between the handling of the landscape and the business with the images picturing it. it really makes me want to deal with photographs myself – if only to wander around... them and me... appear and disappear whenever it pleases me... and look out for some of the mysteries which might – also here – still be...

The expedition comes to an end. We have seen a little town called Boyers and we have been walking on ground that is grooved. We can only go a little bit farther toward an entrance on the far south of the mine, more than a mile away, still above the tunnels. We do not expect to enter here nor anywhere else, but this was not the reason to come here anyway. The pictures underground and the landscape above it leave us in the midst of a blind alley.

everything's so green – lush green. even the former entrance to the mine, flooded and mossy, but green. does the green want to tell us another story? the color of universality and global cohesion? – doesn't help us too much here. in the middle ages green represented evil, demonic beings. – walking around here, this makes more sense. in north america green is the sign that denotes a rise in stock markets – speculations – strange relations – being here.

And here is where I leave you now and let you return to another space.

**Cabinet 2:
What is an Author?**



Cabinet 2

What is an Author?

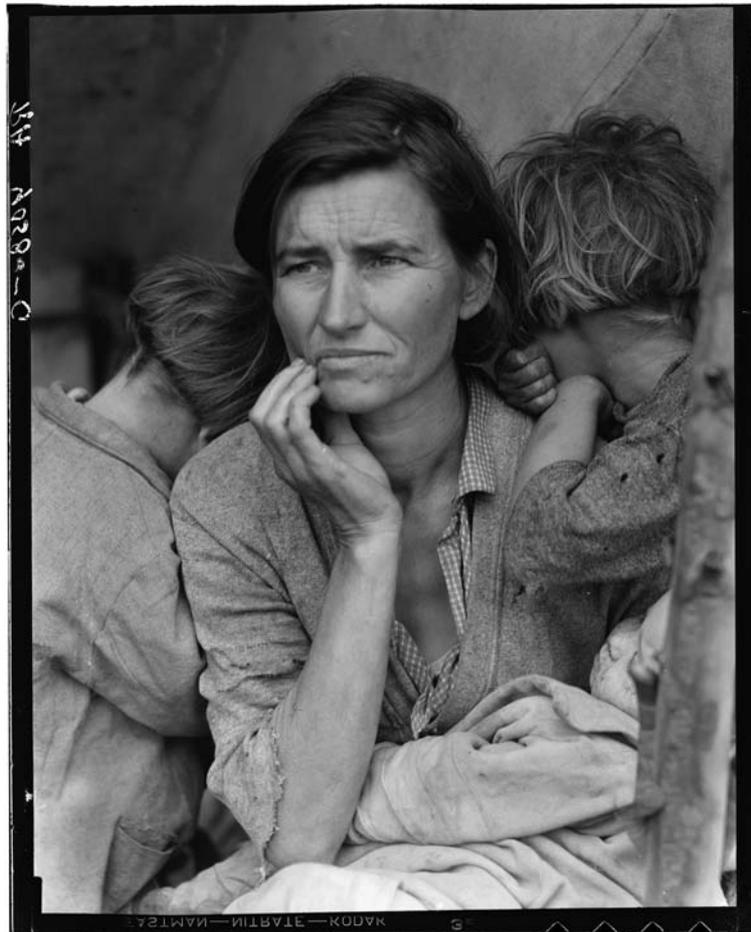
C2_Introduction Lange's *Migrant Mother*: An iconic image, its readings and interpretations—Ownership versus Authorship—Obligations to act, limits to do so—The civil contract of photography (Azoulay)—Marxist readings of the photographic process (Edelman, Tagg)—Agents of the photographic process—The death of the author and the limits of the cancellation (Foucault)—Practices around the notion of the author, intentionally confused (The Atlas Group, Walid Raad, Arab Image Foundation).

C2_Image: Migrant Mother

C2_Essay: Holt Reading of the archive of the artist Nancy Holt—The archive as a place of collaboration and individual activity—Individual artistic work and collaborative projects and productions—Then: how to render the archive of a female artist visible?—How to acknowledge the individual's work while not erasing the parts of the archive that point towards the significance of friendship and love?—Attempts and Proposals—What could have been? What could be?

C2_Work: Schaber_Diabolic Tenant A reworking of a piece by Reich and Mies van der Rohe—Readings of history—Accepting existing structures to include other ones versus creating new structures—What did Reich do?—A dialogue between two curtains on the role of the display and its political function—An attempt to ask questions, despite all.

What is an Author?



Legally speaking, any person who holds the title of author over “literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, or certain other intellectual works” owns, as holder of the copyright, exclusive rights to their work, to its execution as well as the authorisation of its production or distribution.¹ More broadly, an author is defined as the person who originates something or brings something into existence, the person who is accountable for what is created. The various assessments of the term author suggest

¹ See The United States Copyright Office title 17, U.S. Code.

that there is an open field for interpretation, or at least that there is some confusion as to what an author could or should be. Is authorship a right, a responsibility, a definition of production, or an obligation to act? Who is responsible for determining the position, who enacts the consequences, and who grapples with the interpretations?

In practice the legal definition of the author has posed many obstacles to the assessment of photographic attribution and meaning. In photographic discourse one image in particular has haunted these questions for many decades: Dorothea Lange's picture of the *Migrant Mother*, taken in 1936 in Nipomo, California, and commissioned by the Farm Security Administration project (FSA).

Initially created as the Resettlement Administration (RA) in 1935 as part of the New Deal in the United States, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) was an effort during the Depression to combat rural poverty in America. The FSA concentrated on "rural rehabilitation" efforts to improve the lifestyle of sharecroppers, tenants, and very poor landowning farmers. It initiated a program to purchase submarginal land owned by poor farmers, aiming to resettle them in group farms on land more suitable for efficient farming. The program also included a cultural section that involved architecture, photography, mural paintings, etc. The FSA became famous for its small yet highly influential photography program, which was in action between 1935 and 1944 and portrayed the challenges of rural poverty. Photographers and writers were hired to report and document the plight of the poor farmer. The Information Division of the FSA was responsible for providing the public with educational materials and press information. Under Roy Stryker, the Information Division of the FSA adopted the goal of "introducing America to Americans." Many of the most famous Depression-era photographers were fostered by the FSA project. Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Gordon Parks are three of the most renowned.

While on assignment as a photographer for the RA of the US Government, Lange made a series of six images in a pea pickers' camp. When Lange told the story years later, she explained that the decision to stop at the camp was fortuitous. She was driving home after a month in the field when she happened upon a sign identifying the camp. She tried to ignore the sign and drive on, but after twenty miles she was compelled to return, "following instinct, not reason." In a very short period

of time, she shot six photographs of the woman as well as members of her family, starting at a distance and working her way closer and closer. Roy Stryker,² head and commissioner of the RA, and later the FSA, described the last picture in the series that became so famous:

After all these years, I still get that picture out and look at it. The quietness and stillness of it . . . Was that woman calm or not? I've never known. I cannot account for that woman. So many times I've asked myself what is she thinking? She has all of the suffering of mankind in her but all of the perseverance too. A restraint and a strange courage. You can see everything you want to in her. She is immortal. Look at that hand. Look at the child. Look at those fingers—those two heads of hair When Dorothea Lange took that picture, that was the ultimate. She never surpassed it. To me, it was *the* picture of Farm Security.³

The image became the icon of the FSA, and many cultural theorists still comment on it. The discourses surrounding the image can be roughly divided into two arguments: one describes the encounter between Lange and the migrant mother (later identified as Florence Owens Thompson) and in doing so describes the relation between a photographer and a photographed person.⁴ The other focuses on the historical conditions, programs, and politics that produced the image and occasioned its appearance.⁵

The positions taken up in the first argument were mostly provoked by a newspaper report on Florence Owens Thompson which was published in 1978 by the Associated Press's magazine *American Photographer*. As often quoted, Thompson complained about the image and the fact that it had not helped her at all. "That's my picture hanging all over the world, and I can't get a penny out of it." Thompson had

² Roy Stryker (1893-1975) became the head of the Historical Section (Information Division) of the RA in 1935. The RA was renamed the Farm Security Administration, for which Stryker set up the photo-documentary project. His fights with the photographers on the use and quotation of the images are legendary.

³ Quoted in Roy Stryker, Nancy Wood, *In this Proud Land: America 1935-1943 as Seen in the FSA Photographs* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1973), 19.

⁴ See James C. Curtis, "Dorothea Lange, Migrant Mother, and the Culture of the Great Depression," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 21, (1986): 1-20; Martha Rosler, "In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," in Martha Rosler, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings 1975-2001* (New York: MIT Press, 2004), 151-206.

⁵ See L. Carlebach, "Documentary and Propaganda: The Photographs of the Farm Security Administration," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 8 (1988): 6-25; and James C. Curtis, "Documentary Photographs as Texts," *American Quarterly*, 40 (1988): 246-252.

even tried to suppress the photo's publication, unsuccessfully.⁶ Lange on the other hand understood the image as belonging to Thompson. She attempted to counter Thompson's claim of loss of ownership by declaring that the true owner of the photograph was the woman who was photographed: "The negative now belongs to the Library of Congress which supervises it and prints it . . . until now it is her picture, not mine."⁷

The second argument concerns its mode of production, the former and current institutional conditions that surround it, the agency that both produced it and used it, and the archive that holds it today. The positions these arguments assume are based on two major points. First, it is argued that an idea of the images existed even before the images were made and that the production of the FSA's cultural program can thus be described as part of a political program of propaganda that promoted the New Deal. This perspective is substantiated mostly by calling attention, on the one hand, to the instructions that Stryker gave his photographers regarding how they were supposed to picture rural areas and, on the other hand, to the control he kept over the publication of the images. One of Stryker's main concerns was how the pictures could potentially effectuate his mission: "Emphasize the idea of abundance—the "horn of plenty"—and pour maple syrup over it"⁸

The second point put forward by the more institutionally oriented critique of the image insists that Stryker invested great care, even among the images that were already made, in deciding which pictures were selected for public viewing. Not only did he control which images would be sent to magazines, museums, or agencies, he also governed the production process from the moment the rolls of film arrived at the lab. Reviewing the first prints at his table, he sometimes manually "punched" negatives that did not qualify, thereby literally erasing them. Furthermore, beyond the production of visual arguments intended to back up the office's need to advertise and justify their program, Stryker and the FSA created an "Encyclopaedia Americana." The collection of more than 70,000 images became the visual

⁶ The story is quoted in Martha Rosler, *decoys and disruptions, selected writings 1975-2001* (New York: MIT Press, 2004), 151–206; and Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 101–05.

⁷ Marie Monique Robin, *Les 100 photos du siècle* (Paris: Editions du Chêne, 2000), quoted in Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 101.

⁸ Quoted in Jack F. Hurley, *Portrait of a Decade: Roy Stryker and the Development of Documentary Photography in the Thirties* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 148.

representation par excellence of that time, a collection of images emblematic of the thirties. But the images that make up this encyclopaedia of more than a decade emerged from a very narrow assignment dictating what to picture: the rural poor, “outalucks,” people that needed some help from the government to become respectful and self-sustaining citizens once again, families on the road in search of a future. Anything that did not fit within this assignment was not photographed, or was erased. There is no attempt at visualising the dynamics that produced the conditions which caused these people’s suffering in the first place; there is no activist or militant uprising visible; there is no picture in which one could glimpse a form of life outside that of the context of the family; and there are no images of freaks, single women, or bad guys. The encyclopaedia is partial.

The conditions of Thompson’s life have not changed as a result of the image. Lange made the images of Thompson without ever mentioning her name and fought with Stryker to access and use her negatives for her own purposes, losing the fights. Stryker, on the other hand, who published a book on the FSA photographs, had access to them even long after he had retired from his position as head of the department of the FSA. The Library of Congress, which today hosts the images in its archive, not only makes the image publicly accessible for free but also tries to elaborate on the larger historical context of its production.

The two readings of Lange’s image of Florence Owens Thompson could also be described as two treatments of entirely different entities that are joined through an image: one dealing with a single image, with what is visible in that image, with the relation between the photographer and the photographed person, and thus with the role of the image’s author; and the other concentrating on the contextual framing of that image, the context in which it was produced, the agency that commissioned it, the institution that owns the image, and the processes that have influenced its reading. What is at stake in the readings (although it is rarely named as such) is, in my opinion, the role of the sovereign: the role of a person, institution, or structure that rules the image or dictates its making, its publicity, its contextual appearance, and the way it can be accessed and used. The series of arguments encircling this figure are bound to questions of who is in control of the image and who influences its production, its meaning, and the activity that it can catalyse. This role is sometimes

associated with the function of the author, with her/his rights and obligations, and sometimes with the owner of the image who is affiliated with the institution that commissioned the image in the first place.

The readings of the question of who governs the image of Thompson have not only become legendary; they are unceasing. Triggered by the 1978 newspaper report on the woman in the famous image who, until then, did not even have a name, many readings comment on Thompson's discontent and anger at the image being made at all. The loss of Thompson's sovereignty over "her own" image, the loss of Lange's sovereignty to control the distribution of "her own" image, and the sovereignty of Stryker over "his own image," over its printing, distribution, and naming, have provoked a series of texts and questions dealing with the responsibilities and obligations—but also with the limits—of social documentary photography. Within these discussions, the role of the author is crucial, but it is conflicted by the institution that limits and overrules the activities that we normally assign to it.

MULTIPLE AUTHORS AND OWNERS

One of the most interesting readings of the image in this respect is Ariella Azoulay's notion of a civil contract embedded in photography. In relation to Lange's image *Migrant Mother*, she states:

The concept of property and ownership are foreign to the logic of photography. What is seen in a photograph evades all criteria for ownership, and cannot be appropriated; from this it is impossible to establish a single, stable meaning of photography that would negate or supersede all others. A photograph is neither the product of a single person, despite the concept of the "author" having been established in relation to photography, nor is it even solely a product of human hands. A photographic image, then, can at most be entrusted to someone for a certain time. It is a deposit, temporarily given over to whomever has it for safekeeping, but such persons are never its owner. . . . At the same time that a photograph lies in someone's hands, someone else can always claim the deposited image for themselves, or at least demand to participate in its safekeeping. Since the safekeeping of the deposit ranges anywhere from burying it in the archives to giving it widespread circulation, from preservation "as is" to being exhibited in a different light, someone else may still wish to display or cast it in a different

light. The demand to participate in the deposit's safekeeping is not made in the name of a right to possess the deposited image, for this demand expresses a rejection of any right that might be given to someone in regard to a photograph. The demand to participate in the deposit's safekeeping stems from a duty towards the deposit as such, towards what has been deposited, toward whoever deposited it, and toward the archive itself.⁹

Azoulay proposes an understanding of photography as a civil contract in which all actors involved—photographers, photographed persons, and spectators—are participants in the production of the meaning of photographs. For her, as opposed to being citizens of a nation, *everybody* is a citizen of the citizenry of photography. Photographs, according to Azoulay, cannot be owned by anybody; the concepts of property and ownership are foreign to their logic. “What is seen in a photograph evades all criteria for ownership, and cannot be appropriated; from this it is impossible to establish a single, stable meaning of photography that would negate or supersede all others.”¹⁰ Consequently, all citizens of the civil contract are obliged to address and readdress images while constantly negotiating the construction of their meaning. The civil contract of photography thus proposes a body of citizenship without governance, without a sovereign, but with a mutual obligation among its members, who hold the power to act. It organizes “political relations in the form of an open and dynamic framework among individuals, without regulations and mediation by a sovereign.”¹¹

In linking photography with citizenship, Azoulay reframes notions of watching, showing, and dealing with images.¹² Taking examples from an artistic practice as well as a journalistic practice around photography, she insists on an obligation to watch images carefully and to reconstruct the conditions of their making.¹³ Despite the practical and legal complications that Azoulay's statement

⁹ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 103.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹² Azoulay proposes to replace the terms of contemplating, observing, seeing or looking at photographs by the term of *watching* them. For her, watching photographs proposes continuity rather than instantaneity. “The act of a prolonged observation [which the term watching in accordance to watching films suggests] by the observer as spectator has the power to turn a still photograph into a theatre stage on which what has been frozen in the photograph comes to live.” See Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 169. In the following I will adopt Azoulay's notion of watching photographs.

¹³ Azoulay does not give much attention to the archive or to other ‘producers’ surrounding photography in the *Civil Contract of Photography*. However, she has written extensively on various

might generate within an existing system of authorship, ownership, and copyrights, and despite the fact that her proposal might fail to heal Florence Owens Thompson's hurt feelings regarding her image's multiplication all over the world, Azoulay's notion of actualising a duty towards images might be one of the best explanations of why the discourses and statements surrounding the image of the *Migrant Mother* never stop—they are an articulation of the unsolved problems that remain, problems between the practice of photography and its legal and institutional context.

A LEGAL SUBJECT

For Azoulay, the distribution of images within their social and political contexts is hindered by the regulations of photography's exchange relations through market forces and through the juridical system that legitimises these regulations. For her, “the concepts of property and ownership are *ontologically foreign* to photography.”¹⁴ Whereas Azoulay formulates an observation of the practices of photography and its involved actors—and states a duty of being an active observer—Bernhard Edelman describes how the legal development of the concept of the author in photography had to be established early on, and why it is still active. In his book, *Ownership of the Image: Elements for a Marxist Theory of Law*,¹⁵ Edelman describes this legal history in the early nineteenth century in France, going from the description of photography as a “soulless machine” (1860s/70s) to the conception of the “subject-creator” (1910s), the “capital-author” (1930s) and the “collective subject” (1970s).

At the inception of its juridical definition in France, photography was defined as “soulless labour”: the machine (the camera) was understood to produce images technically, without the need of a hand or the creative impact of a person. At this stage, the labour surrounding photography was disqualified as mechanical, and the reproduction of the real was defined as anything but artistic. Later the soulless

archives and worked with several of them afterwards. See also Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: The Political Ontology of Photography* (forthcoming), and Ariella Azoulay on the exhibition *Constituting Violence, 1947–1950: A visual genealogy of a regime and “a catastrophe from their point of view”* (catalogue text).

¹⁴ Ibid, 103 (emphasis mine).

¹⁵ Bernhard Edelman, *Ownership of the Image: Elements for a Marxist Theory of Law* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

photographer was set up as an *artist* and the filmmaker as creator, “since the relations of production would demand it.”¹⁶

Edelman’s take on this massive shift in the definition of the labour of photography is not a description of the economic process that produced the shift in the first place. Instead, it is an elaboration of the way this process was reproduced within French law and the way law made this shift *effective*. From this point on photography was defined as labour imprinted with personality, and it was therefore legally “protected” only on the “condition of bearing the intellectual mark of its author, the imprint necessary to its being a creation.”¹⁷ Therefore the “real” belongs to the subject only if the subject *invests* in it. Edelman continues by moving from a description of the photographic process to one of filmic production. Here he is able to describe the process of the *socialisation of a subject-creator* into a *collective subject* through the processes and legal disputes around film as a product of the combination of intellectual *and* industrial production, a conflict that will be decided in favour of the producer of film and his capital. Cinema has its “author,” even if “*the author is not a subject but a process . . . the true creative subject is capital.*”¹⁸ The producer is the owner of the creation he produces. The collective subject is capitalistic. This is why, for Edelman, the struggle for the “recognition of a subject-creator unveils the dialectical truth of the cinema process—the forced coexistence of

¹⁶ John Tagg specifies this demand: “The historical voice of bourgeois legality dares to speak what we might have only suspected: that individuality, creativity and property are inseparably bound together. And yet, while for a definite period photography was excluded from this charmed circle, the force that expelled it and which made of the photographer a machine stripped of rights as subject in law, was not economically neutral. This first photograph of the law was therefore transformed as the force was displaced. Under the economic pressure of a photographic industry which had become a significant sector of capitalist production, the soulless machine was translated into the a means for the creative expression of the subject; the latter could receive legal protection because it bore the intellectual mark of its creator which was ‘the imprint necessary to the work’s having the characteristics of individuality necessary to its being a creation’. The shifts of an economic process – a paradigm of capitalist industrialisation – were reproduced within the law and made effective by it. As industry took account of photography, the most unexpected juridical effects were engendered: the servile photographer was set up as an artist and creator, since the relations of productions would demand it.” John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 111.

¹⁷ Edelman, 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

art and industry which can exist only under the form of the subject.”¹⁹ The paradox is resolved—at the cost of bourgeois ideology.²⁰

(T)(M)AKING IMAGES

Although Edelman describes the shift from the “author” to the “collective subject” through an analysis of the production process of film, one could argue that this shift also occurred within photographic production. This is a point that John Tagg also makes: “Though photographic ‘creation’ was . . . presented in law as the product of labour of an isolated subject, what in fact was involved—even before the invention of cinema—was the industrialisation of artistic production: that is, a production in which the socialisation of production, exchange and consumption are realised at the same time. . . . The effective ‘subject’ of industrialised photographic and cinematic production was designated as the entrepreneur or producer who, as ‘creative subject’, secured the property rights for disposition and commercial exploitation.”²¹ The position of the author and the owner of the process are thereby confused or, to use Edelman’s terms, realised within capitalistic production through a process. According to this reading, the discussions of the image of the *Migrant Mother* could be described differently, and the confusion about the notions of control and responsibilities that surround the image could be set in a different context: Lange was not the author of the image, but a detail worker.

Azoulay tries to rescue photography, to carry it beyond, or defend it against, these legal implementations, because for her the laws regulating photography are “ontologically foreign” to its process. But only through excluding the legal process from her argument is she able to state that there is a moment in the production of images when the relation between individuals marks a specific encounter that is part of a civil contract. The laws of ownership, authorship, and copyright are present in

¹⁹ Ibid., 60.

²⁰ See also at <<http://stealingsouls.org/node/51#attachments>> an interview with Bernhard Edelman by *The Museum of the Stealing of Souls*. (2008). Accessed: August 23, 2009.

²¹ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 114.

the production of any photograph, even though they contradict many of the practices of photography.

The contradictions between the legal definitions of authorship and ownership, and the ways of producing them, complicate the practice of photography. Since 1936, when Lange took the photograph of Thompson, much has changed in the awareness of people who are photographed, and they often demand from it something more than Thompson did.

On a road trip in Mississippi, photographing post Hurricane Katrina architecture, a man who had supposedly watched us walking around for a couple of days invited me into his house. The man, who introduced himself as Anthony Gazzo, is a lifetime inhabitant of the city of Biloxi, and one of the few who had not left after the storm. His specific position arose from the fact that he refused to rebuild his house according to the new rules and regulations that were established after the storm. Instead, Gazzo, who did not receive any financial support because of his refusal, rebuilt the house by himself as it had been. Gazzo wanted me to make a picture of him, and he wanted people from the outside to tell his story: from the newspaper clippings on his walls, we could see that he had already managed to make this happen a few times. He told us of one picture taken of him by a news photographer who had won prizes and earned a lot of money with the photograph. Gazzo was proud of this picture. It was his. He had directed the making of it. His demand to participate in the reporting of the post Katrina story was addressed to us as well. We recorded it. He demanded, we followed. Gazzo did not act as the victim used by the media, but carefully tried to direct us according to his cause.



Anthony Gazzo, who directed the making of this image, in his house in East Biloxi, Mississippi (photographed by Ines Schaber on March 17, 2010).

CANCELLING OUT THE QUESTION

The image I took of Gazzo did not reach the realm of distribution he might have hoped for. Yet his desire to exist somewhere else and be represented and present outside his everyday life was fulfilled. One could say his approach to the medium contradicts the medium's legal status, even though, or exactly because, he is neither interested in the economic outcome of the undertaking nor afraid of his image being misused. Although Gazzo directed the taking of his image, he left it up to us to do what we thought best with it. The role of the author in our encounter was dispersed: I took an image that I was asked to take, that I was directed in the making of. Nevertheless, the cancellation of the existence of an author and the practice attributed to its position could only be momentary. If I were to enter other fields to make Gazzo's image and his story present, I would very likely be confronted with questions of authorship and production rights, and I might have difficulties actualising the relation that Gazzo had proposed. Even though we suspended the role of the author temporarily, we clearly could not get rid of it altogether.

This is also a point that Foucault warns of in his text about the author and its announced “death.”²² He writes that the “figure of the author” had appeared in history only at a specific moment in discourse (the Renaissance), and that it is therefore not a timeless, irreducible category, but a “function of a discourse” which changes over the course of history. Foucault displays the mechanism by which an author is invented, produced, and constructed and states that since it is constructed, it might as well be deconstructed. But abolishing the idea of the author as origin and owner of his work might, according to Foucault, be easier said than done. Philosophy and criticism announced its disappearance—or its death—some time ago; and although a certain number of notions were invented in order to replace its privileged position, they actually seem to preserve it and suppress the real meaning of the author’s disappearance.

Foucault, however, does not stop at exposing the shift in the discursive field. Instead, he concludes his text with a proposal to overturn the traditional problem and replace it with a different kind of question, one that does not change the terms, but rather fundamentally cancels out the questions asked. He writes:

I think that as our society changes, at the very moment when it is in the process of changing, the author-function will disappear and in such a manner that fiction and its polysemic texts will once again function according to another mode, but still with a system of constraint—one which will no longer be the author, but which will have to be determined, or perhaps, experienced. . . . We would no longer hear the questions that have been rehashed for so long: ‘Who really spoke? Is it really he and not somebody else? With what authenticity and originality? And what part of his deepest self did he express in his discourse?’ Instead, there would be other questions, like this: ‘What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects?’²³

So where, one could ask, are the places where there is room for possible subjects who work at the creation of history through images, a history that is not only defined by an author and the functions we attribute to him or her, but by a set of questions which circulate the production, use, and actors involved in the photographic process?

²² Michel Foucault, “What is an author?,” in David Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London and New York: Longman, 2008), 196–210.

²³ *Ibid.*, 210.

A NOTION, INTENTIONALLY CONFUSED

Each of the aforementioned theoretical approaches to the notion of the author, whether they argue from the point of view of a legal, Marxist, ontological, discursive, or literary field, resonate in photographic practices. Often, however, these practices are unable to actualise or resolve the theoretically posed arguments. Instead, they require a new way of handling or solving the problem in practice. One such example is a body of work by a group of people who deliberately attribute their work to various authors while inventing diverse practices in various fields in and around photography.

In this respect, it is telling that I cannot remember when I connected the name Walid Raad to the work of *The Atlas Group* for the first time. I had seen some of “their” shows, and perhaps I overlooked any relation to an artist’s name. I am just as unsure of how my encounter with the clue that they were somehow connected felt: did it feel like a further operation of their technique, or like a confusing trail that kept becoming more and more diffuse? Memory tricks us sometimes, but the history of The Atlas Group, which supposedly ceased operations in 2004, is difficult to follow as a cohesive, linear narrative. In most of their public appearances, information and dates about them vary. In some publications, the heading The Atlas Group²⁴ is printed under the work; in others, The Atlas Group becomes a project by Walid Raad;²⁵ still in others, the same work is exhibited by Raad himself;²⁶ and recently the works were exhibited as a project curated by Marwan Baroudi.²⁷ The same befuddlement clouds the founding date of the group, which fluctuates within a time frame between 1967 and 2002, and the description of the purpose of the work. “How does one write the history of the Lebanese Civil War?”: this question underlies one public appearance. While in another case, “Lebanese War” is replaced with “Lebanese Wars”;²⁸ and still in another case, the project is described as “The history

²⁴ E.g. *The Atlas Group. Volume 3* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2007).

²⁵ The exhibition and the catalogue at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin in 2006/7 was titled *The Atlas Group (1989-2004) – A Project by Walid Raad*.

²⁶ E.g. a recent exhibition: Walid Raad – Paula Cooper Gallery, New York City, NY, USA.

²⁷ Kunstverein Heidelberg, *I might Die before I get a Rifle* (1989), 22.11.08 - 01.02.09, A Project by Walid Ra’ad, curated by Marwan Baroudi. With works by Farrid Sarroukh, Janah Hilwe, Maha Traboulsi, Hannah Mrad, Mhammad Sabra.

²⁸ E.g. in *The Atlas Group. Volume 3* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2007), 13.

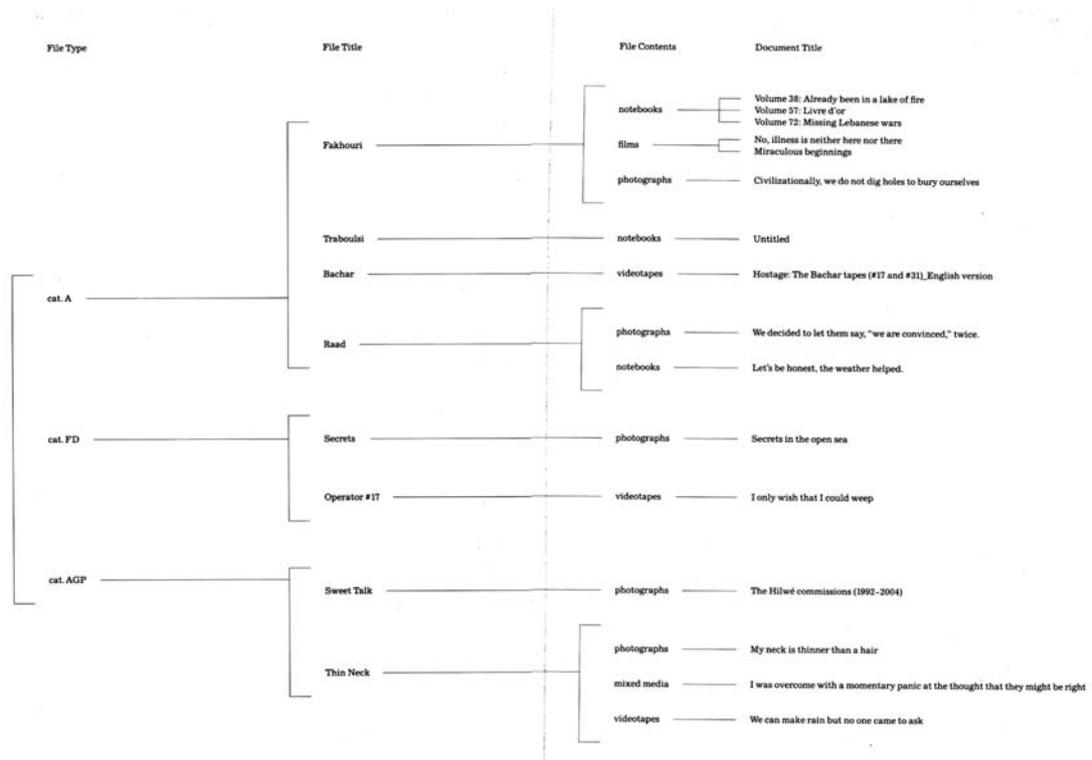
of Lebanon of the past 50 years with particular emphasis on the history of Lebanon since 1975,” or as “the contemporary history of Lebanon.”

The playfulness or “work” geared to muddling attributions of authorship and confusing the group’s own history does not stop at the description of the group itself; it continues in the pieces the group has exhibited in recent years: documents are attributed to Raad himself, to The Atlas Group, to Dr. Fadl Fakhouri, a person named Traboulsi or Souheil Bachar. They have been found, donated by anonymous sources, or commissioned by The Atlas Group itself. At some point in their existence the group exposed the attributions as fictional. Notions of authenticity regarding the documents as well as the authorship ascribed to them, which are often used to legitimise the status of a document, are humorously questioned. Interestingly, however, the thirteen pieces that have been produced by the group or attributed to it thus far have themselves never changed, and the images have never been reused. The writing of the history of Lebanon through and alongside images is done via the narration that accompanies them. It is not a history that shows war as we are accustomed to seeing it in newspapers and common forms of representation. On the contrary, it is a history that invests in the flipside of what war is, or what it looks like.

Take the *Notebook Volume 72: Missing Lebanese Wars*, for example, a piece that is attributed to Dr. Fadl Fakhouri. We follow the story of Lebanese historians (Marxists and Islamists) who meet at horse races and wager on “precisely when—how many fractions of a second before or after the horse crossed the finishing line—the photographer would expose his frame.” The piece documents Lebanese historians as gamblers, betting on documents and their predicted “inexactitude.” Another piece shows newspaper photographs taken (supposedly) of the one part that is always left over after a car bombing: the engine, which is scattered about, often in more than a hundred pieces (*My neck is thinner than hair: Engines*, attributed to The Atlas Group). One sees people gathering around the remnants of the engines, inspecting the remains of the “event.” No massacred or dead, no hysteria or crying people are pictured. Instead the piece shows the coolness of the scene, an everyday life procedure, as well as war becoming part of ballistic science.

The pieces showing fractions of an everyday experience in a place at war are not unorganised. They appear in the form of an archive, an archive that in turn

becomes an exhibition; and this exhibition shifts back to an archive after the show is over, or is simply borrowed from the archive for public appearance in an exhibition space. In many shows the pieces are introduced with a chart at the exhibition's entrance space.²⁹



The Atlas Group Chart

The treelike structure differentiates between three file types: *File Type A* stands for authorial files, or files that contain documents that were produced by The Atlas Group and that are attributable to names of imaginary individuals or organizations. *File Type FD* stands for found files, or files that contain documents that were produced and attributed to anonymous individuals or organisations. Finally *File Type AGP* holds images produced by The Atlas Group. More precisely, they

²⁹ The chart often opens catalogues and is also the structure through which the webpage of the group is organised: <<http://www.theatlasgroup.org>>. Accessed: February 20, 2011.

contain documents that were produced and attributed to The Atlas Group. In addition, the chart gives information about file titles, their contents, and the document titles. Besides the rigidity of the chart, which at first glance mirrors common archival organisational principles, the most telling feature lies in the description of the file types. Each description repeats a specific phrase: “. . . files that we produced and that we attribute”³⁰ The writing and organisation, the selection and naming are things *produced* as well as *attributed*: The focus does not rest on research, scientific methods, field work, or hours spent in the archive. It lies in production. The Atlas Group’s writing of history is something produced.

The webpage of The Atlas Group’s archive leaves no doubt as to who produces and attributes the documents: besides the listings of the publications by and about The Atlas Group (most of them naming Raad) there is also a section referring to Raad himself. It shows his biography, his CV, the galleries who represent him, the distributors of his video works, exhibition images, and upcoming lectures. No other individual is mentioned, and the game whose function it was to question the authentication of documents by playing on the notions of authorship and the attribution of the documents runs the risk of turning into a trick. In an art context, projects like The Atlas Group often run the risk of becoming identified, that is to say, recognised and named through an author who can be connected to a work and to whom the work can be accredited. On The Atlas Group’s webpage, Raad does nothing to fight this accreditation. It is a necessary instance in the acknowledgment of his work and his existence as an artist. He is caught in a vicious cycle. However, the main point for me lies not entirely in the actual attribution of the work but rather in the fragile relationship between the production of work and its attribution. If a project like The Atlas Group were to turn its work too far away from the task of writing the history of the wars in Lebanon or focus too much on the narration or accreditation of work and the discourses around authorship, they would risk missing the point altogether—or as Foucault might argue, they would risk reaffirming the very notions they criticise. The strength of the works of The Atlas Group lies, or lay, in connecting the discourses of authenticity and authorship with the writing of history as such, in particular the history of Lebanon. The importance of the work is,

³⁰ Ibid.

or was, the articulation of a practice that insists that there can be no writing of a history without questioning the established notions of authorship, attribution, and authenticity. History and its representation are connected and cannot be separated, whether through writing or through imaging.

In 2008 an exhibition with the title *I Might Die Before I Get A Rifle* was opened at the Kunstverein in Heidelberg. The show is yet another take on a further narrative invention regarding the production of the pieces that were previously attributed to Raad or The Atlas Group. Although the group officially ceased operating in 2004, shows in Heidelberg and elsewhere are signs that the works it produced will reappear embedded in other narratives, attributions, and authors who are associated with them. The exhibition announcement in Heidelberg reads:

In 1989, Marwan Baroudi, chief curator of Part Four in Alexandria (Egypt) mounted an exhibition titled, *I Might Die Before I Get A Rifle*. The exhibition featured the works of five artists from Lebanon: Farrid Sarroukh, Janah Hilwé, Maha Traboulsi, Hannah Mrad, and Mhammad Sabra. It brought together five projects by artists who explored how the physical and psychological violence of the past fourteen years in Lebanon had been lived, experienced, and formed. Remarkably, a few years later, in 2002, many of the same documents would emerge again, but this time attributed to The Atlas Group, an art project by the artist Walid Raad. Over the years, Raad has proposed various definitions of his project. Today, he refers to The Atlas Group as “an art project undertaken between 1989 and 2004 about the possibilities and limits of writing the contemporary history of Lebanon, and/or The Atlas Group is an artwork produced sometime in the last decade about a universe of objects, characters, and situations in and from Lebanon that can only emerge in fiction.”³¹

According to a gallery announcement in 2004, Johan Holten asked Marwan Baroudi to revisit his *I Might Die Before I Get A Rifle*. Baroudi and Holten were interested in once again making the 1989 exhibition available, displaying the same artworks, complete with original captions. This proved to be more difficult than originally thought, as Baroudi spent four years tirelessly locating and gathering the original artworks from the various places they had been scattered throughout. “This

³¹ From the exhibition announcement at the Kunstverein Heidelberg.

exhibition owes much to his endurance and perseverance, and to the generosity of the various collectors, institutions, and others who preserved these artworks.”³²

Even for Baroudi, who is a trained art historian, archaeologist and journalist, and who also worked as an actor, stage designer and painter, it was an extremely difficult task to track the current home of the works. Of extreme help for the undertaking to track the art pieces was the network that he had been building between 1961 and 1969 as the director of the Cairo Artspace. It was also there where he had conceptualized the legendary exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*. Furthermore, his position as the youngest curator ever of the Al-Fan Biennial in Beirut in 1972 strengthened his influential position in the Arab art world. Parallel to his work in Beirut he founded the “Museum of Obsessions” and the “Agency for intellectual subcontracted Labor”, which is still in operation. Since 1981 he is the sole curator of Part Four in Alexandria, where he, amongst others, exhibited works of Marcel Broodthaers, Kamal Boulatta, Sol Lewitt, Ad Reinhardt, Janah Hilwé and Chantal Akerman.³³

Anyone who has seen other exhibitions by The Atlas Group would recognise the individual works in the exhibition in Heidelberg immediately, and thus the focus of watching becomes one of reading the new context that is created and constructed around them. One is already aware that the works are made by Raad, and one has already seen them attributed to other groups or people.³⁴ Reading the new narration in which the works are placed is like following another fiction of authorship—though this time it indicates one artist with an even stronger emphasis.

The earlier attributions of the works as well as the works themselves had created a discourse of war which did not render war as a dramatic and spectacular event but as a collection of narratives about the flipside of war: a story of gambling historians; a competition among reporters based on who would be the fastest to detect a car bomb; a doctor’s series of holiday photographs; a young boy learning to photograph, using his camera for the first time to photograph Israeli soldiers lying under a military car, hiding from the sun; an analysis of the countries where bullets in photographs of Beirut are manufactured; a listing of the cars used for car bombs;

³² Quoted from the webpage of gallery Sfeir and Semler: <<http://www.sfeir-semmler.com/sites/raad/startraadonly.html>>. Accessed August, 2009.

³³ Second part of the exhibition announcement in Heidelberg, published in German only (my translation).

³⁴ See the work *We decided to let them say, We are convinced, twice*, which, previously attributed to Raad himself, is attributed to Maha Taboulsi in the show in Heidelberg and is called *Untitled (1983)*.

and so on.

The re-attributions of existing works to other authors, like in the show in Heidelberg, points to a fictitious legacy that stages its own fiction. Farrid Saroukh, Janah Hilwé, Maha Traboulsi, Hannah Mrad, and Mhammad Sabraein might or might not be living artists, just as Marwan Baroudi might or might not have been a curator. In Heidelberg, existing characters are mixed with fictitious ones, and well known (Western) artists create the platform for the fictitious artists from Egypt and Lebanon.

In earlier constructions around the works, the people appearing, the contributors, and the donors of the material were varied, and the work seemed less centred on the issue of the fictionality of the persons involved. The project was more concerned with rendering the normative discourses of war visible than on writing oneself into an existing, established discourse.

My reading of the show in Heidelberg might be relevant only for a person who is a frequent viewer of work made by The Atlas Group / Raad. But the question of these shifting narrations is also a question of the practice around images and the treatment of history in general within an archive. When does a narrative that was performed to question a stabilisation also become one? Faced with certain arguments which have already been made, where would one have to go to invent other expressions and practices?

In 1996, the *Arab Image Foundation* (AIF) was founded in Beirut. To this day it is in operation as a project that is connected to the work of The Atlas Group not only through a very similar field of work (the representation of Lebanese history in photography) but also through Raad being part of both projects.³⁵ The AIF is present online as a research platform (though still under construction), and it also appears publicly in exhibitions, publications, and films. It appears and operates like a regular photographic foundation that collects and buys photographs; organises its documents and images, mostly around the authors of the images or the donors of the work; and maintains the narrations that accompany the images' original sources. Its aim is described as promoting photography in the Middle East and North Africa by

³⁵ Raad is sometimes named as a cofounder of the AIF, but on the AIF webpage he is named as a member.

locating, collecting, and preserving the region's photographic heritage and creating a centre in Beirut for the preservation and exhibition of its photographic collections, for the study of Arab visual culture, and for the promotion of contemporary Arab cultural production and analysis. Online the AIF states that "all images produced by Arab photographers or residents of the Arab world are of interest. Works of some photographers, previously scattered in various cities will be collected to allow a clearer understanding of their work."³⁶

In some statements The Atlas Group and the Arab Image Foundation are compared and described as "counter-archives."³⁷ But what does that mean? Does it mean that they question the archive, its structure, its evidential belief in the document, and its authenticating tasks whereas the "countered" archive reaffirms them? Does it mean that they are purely "fictional" and "artistic" whereas the countered one is "real"? Or does the counter-archive indicate an "artist and author" whereas the countered archive announces itself as a collaborative or institutional project? Exactly at this point and precisely in this statement lies the danger of over-theorising attempts to break the normative procedures governing photography. Instead of opposing these two projects, I would rather ask which procedure and which (take on) a treatment of images produces what. How could they support each other instead of being "counter-projects"? What could they offer and what could they enable? What are their scopes of production, and to what extent are they limited to themselves and reliant on another form of practice? We need to search for ways that "counter" an entirely different assertion: the assertion that the possibility of dealing with images in a meaningful way is defunct.

In a lecture, Raad spoke about images he had made, images which he had not, however, found a way to deal with:

Since 1994, I have accelerated the pace of my shooting. I have felt and continue to feel an urgent need to document in particular Beirut's streets, storefronts, buildings, statues, but not so much its residents. . . . I have not been able to make prints from the developed negatives I produced since 1994. The few bodies of works, folios, that I painstakingly managed to put together over the past 10 years, I dismissed as soon as I produced. I am not

³⁶ See <www.fai.org.lb/Home.aspx> (mission statement). Accessed February 22, 2011.

³⁷ See, for example, Kassandra Nakas, "Double Miss: On the Use of Photography in The Atlas Group Archive," in *The Atlas Group (1989–2004): A Project by Walid Raad* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2006), 50.

sure why. The only thing I am certain of today about this project is that I am quite fond of the growing stack of negatives that sits in a corner in my studio. Folder next to folder: some titled, others untitled.

My titles and headings with this project are not particularly interesting either. I have not developed an idiosyncratic referencing system. None of that here. The stack of negatives sits in the corner of the studio, not even preserved with archival considerations. Most of my returns to it have been disappointing or frightening, as was the case with the images of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. I imagine a concerted effort to look at the images again, to scan and print them, to see what is there. But I have yet to do so.³⁸

In my own experience, the “I have yet to do so” and the failure of doing so time and again stems, among other things, from the situation that the output, the form, or the context that allows those images to appear has perhaps yet to be developed. Raad’s work, the projects of The Atlas Group, and the work of the *Arab Image Foundation* are important ways to develop those forms. These forms offer a dwelling place to images and stacks of negatives which otherwise could *not be made* or could not enable a way “to see what is there.”

In the talk Raad continues by placing the “not making” of images in direct relation to an inability or indifference in Lebanon towards any documentation of what happens. Quoting a passage from Toufik’s book *Vampires* in which he encounters the description of a photographer, Raad says:

With regards to the surpassing disaster, art acts like the mirror in vampire films—it reveals the withdrawal of what we think is still there. The opening line of *Hiroshima Mon Amour*: “You have seen nothing in Hirsoshima.” Does this entail that one should not record? No. One should record this nothing, which only after the resurrection can be available. We have to take photographs even though because of their reference withdrawal and until their references are resurrected, they are not going to be available as referential documentary pieces. With the risk that facets relating to the subject matter will be mistaken for purely formal ones. A vicious circle. What has to be recorded has to be withdrawn so that unless it is resurrected it is going to be overlooked. But in order to accomplish the prerequisite

³⁸ Transcription of talk delivered by Walid Raad as an introduction to the work of Jalal Toufic, at the United Nation Plaza in Berlin in 2007, at approximately minute 42-44.

work to avert the overlooking, one has initially to have, however minimally, perceived it, that is, countered the withdrawal that has resurrected it.³⁹

Both projects—The Atlas Group and the Arab Image Foundation—and the work of the artists Walid Raad and Akram Zaatari—claim that there is a massive amount of work to be done in the writing of history in Lebanon. Within this theme, the questions around authorship are one, and only one, moment in the way we construct, produce, perceive, and become involved and active in our narrations—be it the ones that have already passed or the ones that will only be accessible in the future. Within this frame, the work of Raad and The Atlas Group is a rare example of testing the notions of authorship, the notions around a documentary tradition, and the making of an archive. However, their projects are also a reminder that these complications might be unresolvable in their respective fields and impossible to rectify once and for all, that they need to be addressed in practice, in time.

³⁹ Ibid., min. 39–41.

The Claims She Stakes

A Reading of Nancy Holt's Archive

Under normal circumstances, visiting an archive is not an exceptional undertaking, and the work one conducts there does not receive explicit mention. What we convey of our doings in the archive is usually about the things we find in it: the documents and images we have discovered in an almost endless mass of material or descriptions of things that might be associated with the subject on which we work. Most of the time we visit an archive in search of something specific.

But what kind of space is this, in which we make our way, trying to approach a question over days or even weeks, striving to fathom layers and grasp threads, distinguishing between the structures established retrospectively and the origins of the documents? Motivated to evaluate the material carefully, we try not to jump to conclusions, endeavor to question our own assumptions, and are willing to be taken by surprise or even to be amazed. What does it mean to start anew time and again, to validate one's seeing and understanding, to transpose media and to verify sources?

What are our objects of consideration? What role do we ourselves, as authors of the material or keepers of the archives play in our reading of the material in relation to the more parenthetical, and seemingly secondary events and persons? Do we visit an archive to prove our own authority or that of an acknowledged author? Or can we browse through the material following unforeseen paths that pose questions we did not expect or query precepts about which we were certain?

What is rarely conveyed about the work in an archive is that sometimes in our movement between folders and drawers, in the search for material through keywords and terms, places, events, and authors, something changes in our conception. What we rarely discuss about a visit to an archive is that our work might even have failed. But what does that mean? Does it mean that we did not find what we came for? Does it mean we were diverted by other material, that we wasted time, or that the thesis with which we arrived could not be proven and so we must start anew? What is our capacity to move and see, to learn, to change our mind, and try to understand? How can we expand on these capacities and communicate them to others? To what extent

might we adapt to ever-changing circumstances and navigate the gulf between ourselves and the materials with which we work?

Before visiting Nancy Holt's archive, I had read articles about her sculptures in magazines, sometimes accompanied by images. I had also seen *Swamp* (1971), one of the collaborative films she made with Robert Smithson. But above all, I knew the photographs of trips she had taken with Smithson and their artist friends that were often reproduced in publications. The format they used featured square segments of landscape, rather than horizontal views, and the images were often sequenced in such a way as to tell a story. Before visiting Holt in Galisteo, New Mexico, I assumed the photographs were the carefully directed work of a 2 1/4-inch medium-format camera, but my technical evaluation proved to be wrong. In the late 1960s most of the photographs documenting their travels—many of which later appeared in exhibitions and catalogues of Smithson's work—were made with a Kodak Instamatic 400 camera.¹ The Instamatic was not a heavy medium-format camera, often requiring a tripod, suggesting a requisite amount of setup and staging, but a small, hand-held, consumer camera. It took twenty-exposure Kodachrome film cartridges, which at the time were readily available and could conveniently be developed anywhere. So my technical assumptions needed to be amended, but what broader implications would be uncovered as I delved deeper into the archive? What kind of reading would the archive—a space of various, diverse materials and working modes—propose?

One question that I adopted as a guideline for my research was the relation between Holt's photography and her sculpture. Much has been written about the role of documentation and land art. Even among land artists' own reflections, there are different opinions. For certain artists, the photographic document communicates necessary information about an artwork located at a remote site. However, other assessments either claim that these images serve to represent the object itself or dismiss them as redundant to the actual experience of the site.² Sometimes the photographic document is critical to our understanding despite being distinct from

¹ Robert Smithson published an in-depth discussion on the Instamatic in relation to site documentation; see Smithson, "The Monuments of Passaic," *Artforum*, 7, (1967): 48–51.

² Simon O'Sullivan says that to "write about these sculptures without attending to their situation within space—and their disruption of linear time—seems willfully human, in fact, redundant." O'Sullivan, "Contours and Case Studies for a Dissenting Subjectivity (or, how to live creatively in a fearful world)," *Angelaki: Journal for a Theoretical Humanities*, 2 (April 2006): 147–54, 150.

the work itself.³ Other times the artist decides not to show the photographic document at all. Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), for example, offers a photographic experience of the site that exceeds the notion of documentation, while Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field* (1977) excludes a variety of photographs from the field of representation; before being brought to his site, visitors are required to sign a contract which forbids them from photographing the work. In the few publications I knew about Holt's work, I had encountered photographs that dealt differently with what I knew in establishing a relationship with sculpture. But what did photography mean for Holt, and how did she use the medium in relation to her sculptures?

Holt's archive is stored in a tall cabinet designed especially for her studio that was added to her adobe house. It consists of approximately seventy three-ring binders containing slides, work prints and posters, most identified with hand-written labels. The binders are labelled by dates, project, or production formats and often contain duplicate slides of original images that are kept in a fireproof metal filing cabinet. It is a working archive. A duplicate slide moved from one slide sheet to a more current project file is simply absent: the empty plastic slot signals the image's own travel within the archive or into the world, bound for exhibition or publication. The archive holds an accumulation of more than forty years of material and images spanning a variety of genres, including landscape, survey, documentation, private, and travel photography. It is not a public archive. It contains material that is too fragile or personal to publish. And although one might be permitted to examine everything, even talk about it, it was clear that some materials were not meant to leave. Over the course of four days, I worked alongside Holt in the archive, sometimes meandering, other times tracking a specific trail. We went from slide folders to print folders and from print folders to exhibition documents. We sat down to record conversations and spent hours leaning over a large light table.

³ One example of a reading that names the position of the sculptor as primary is the exhibition *Sculptors' Photographs* held at Hunter Gallery, New York City, and Macalester College, Minnesota, 1979. The concept of the exhibition names the photographic practice of sculptors. According to the exhibition poster, "The traditional concerns of sculpture and the traditional concerns of photography have broadened: time, mass, light, space, form, and so on, touch both. Yet, there is, no doubt, a group of artists who are distinctly sculptors in terms of their sensibilities and their most visible work. This exhibition will show the photographs of sculptors which are not, in any way, records of their sculpture." Archive, Nancy Holt. Galisteo, New Mexico.

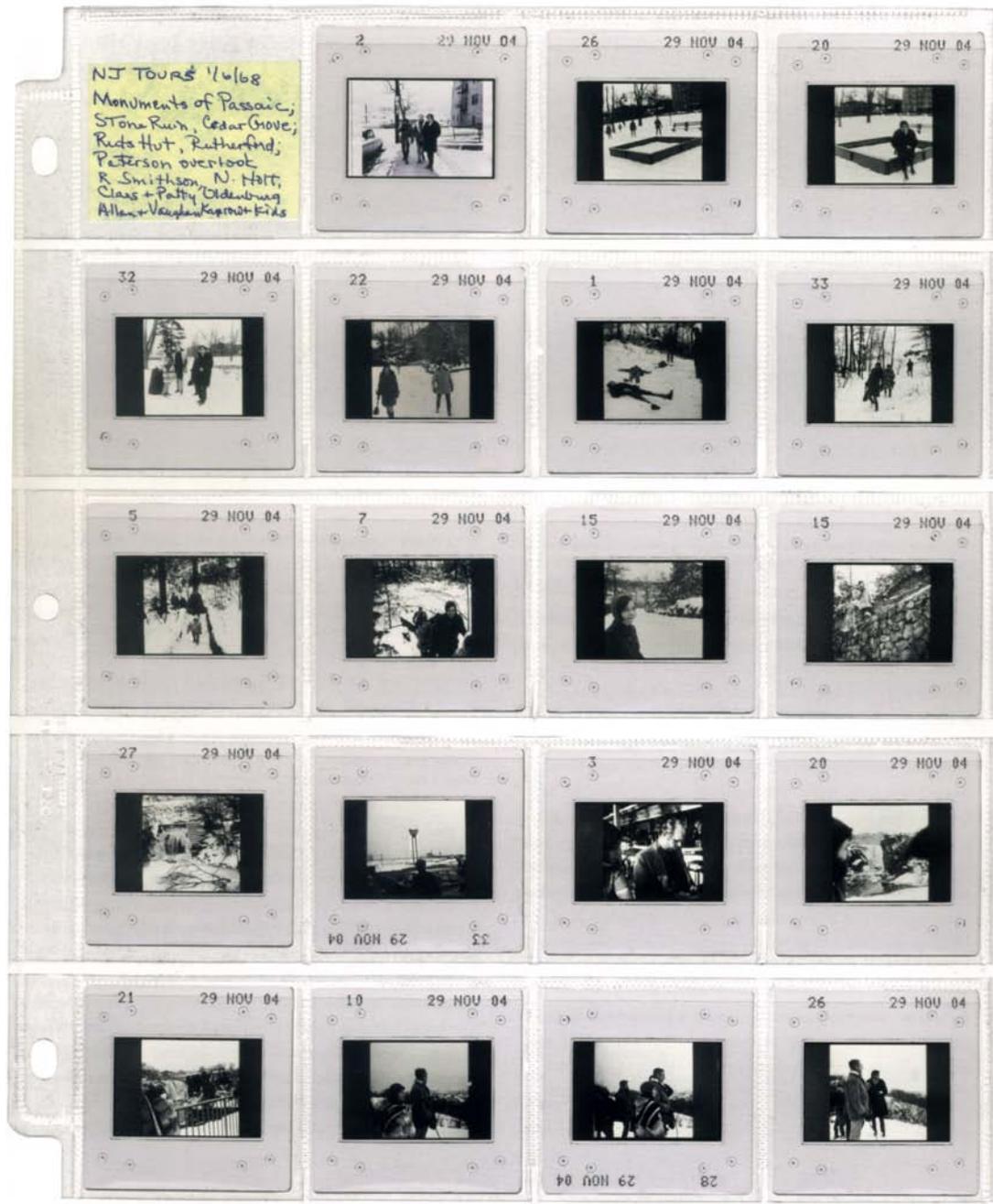
Day One: Crossing into New Territories

EAST

The first binder that caught my attention was titled *Smithson/Holt Travel Slides 1966–1969*, which contained original color slides. The earliest series documented the four-day trip Holt and Smithson took with Howard Junker and Dale McConathy to New Jersey in June 1966. Both Holt and Smithson were raised in New Jersey and, living in New York City, twenty-five minutes away, returned there often. All the trips were planned expeditions. Later I came across another binder with two pages of slides duplicated from a series of black-and-white photographs entitled *Passaic Trip II / Guided Tour of Monuments of Passaic, NJ / January 6th, 1968 / Claes and Patty Oldenburg, [Allan] Kaprow family, N. Holt, R. Smithson*.⁴ Smithson's essay "The Monuments of Passaic," published the previous year in *Artforum*, included six black-and-white photographs, a newspaper clipping, a map showing the region along the Passaic River, and an itinerary. The image in the archive depicts a group of people walking through a snowy landscape, and, initially, Smithson appears to be the guide. The series includes a shot of Smithson, Kaprow, and Oldenburg walking on a sidewalk, as well as one of Oldenburg and Smithson standing on a hill looking out across a field of snow. We also see the group in a playground, at a waterfall, in a parking lot, at the counter of a diner, by a stone wall, at a scenic lookout, in the suburbs, in an industrial area. Holt looks directly into the camera in a photograph, labeled as slide number 15, and climbs a stairway in slide 7.⁵ Sometimes the group poses for the camera; other times they are photographed candidly along the way. The series almost might be a private album, if it were not for identifiable aspects from Smithson's *Monuments*. For example, *The Sand-Box Monument (also called the Desert)* appears in slide 26 and 20, and the river of the *Monuments with Pontoons: The Pumping Derrick* appears in the print folder. The photographs in this series in the archive are the retelling of a story one already knows—this time told in the first person and inhabited by friends as well as monuments.

⁴ Allan Kaprow was accompanied by his first wife, Vaughan Rachel, and two of their children.

⁵ These slides are duplicate images of original black-and-white prints; the numbering scheme ascribed to them by the processing lab does not actually correspond to the original sequence in which the photographs were taken.



Sheet of 35mm duplicate slides titled *Passaic Trip II / Guided Tour of Monuments of Passaic, NJ / January 6th, 1968 / Claes and Patty Oldenburg, [Allan] Kaprow family, N. Holt, R. Smithson.*

WEST

In the summer of 1968, Holt made her first trip to the western desert with Smithson and Michael Heizer. On July 13 they traveled to the desert near Las Vegas; photographs from that trip come under the heading *Searching for Lava + Pumice + Cleaning Truck*.⁶ Again, the pictures might almost be taken from a page in a private album but for certain elements that make one doubt that impression: this time it is the pickup truck that is somehow familiar. Holt both takes photographs and appears in them. Two weeks later the artist friends make the first of several trips to Mono Lake in California. Again Holt photographs and is photographed. Smithson creates *Mono Lake Nonsite* (1968) from gravel he collected there. Smithson and Holt intend to produce a film from the footage shot during the visit, though it will not be realized for a long time. Only in 2004, on the occasion of Smithson's retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, does Holt edit the material that she, Smithson, and Heizer shot back in 1968 into a twenty-minute video. The clicking of a camera inserts the photographs. Click. We see Holt. Click. We see Smithson. Click. We see Heizer. Click. We see Holt and Smithson. Click. We see Heizer and Smithson. Click. *Mono Lake* (1968/2004) is a realisation of the images filed in Holt's archive, a close reading of the documents from that time. Between 1966 and 1969 she made a series of trips with various friends and colleagues that proved fundamental for her later work. It is during these trips that Holt begins to use the camera as a tool of inquiry to explore her surroundings. Several friends in the group share the same camera. Later, it will be hard to determine who took which photograph, and although the question will often be asked, it is unlikely that it was of any importance whatsoever at that moment. They are an expedition party, crossing into unknown territory together. One photographs and is photographed. The camera moves from hand to hand.

⁶ Holt subsequently changed the title of the series *Cleaning Truck* to *Dumping Earth*.



Page of black-and-white prints in the archive titled *Searching for Lava + Pumice + Cleaning Truck*.

SWAMP

- R: Just walk in a straight line.
N: I think, I think, I am.
R: Straight in...to that clump. It is ok here. Go on. It is really solid. Straight in.
Just go right in. Yeah.
Go straight in. Over that way.
To your right. Right.
Into that contrast there. Directly in...
It is ok.
Go ahead...
N: How much of this is out of focus?
R: Well. Just keep going in.
Don't worry about the focus. Just keep advancing in.
...as much as you can.
How is the film holding out?
Ok head over there...
You are heading toward stickers I think...
That way...
N: This way?
R: Yeah...
N: I can't see anything...
R: Well, move to your right. Straight ahead...

Holt films a swamp in New Jersey with her brand-new 16mm Bolex camera. Walking behind the camera and carrying the microphone, Smithson issues directions. Holt wades through the muddy swamp as reeds thrash against the lens, obstructing her view through the finder of the Bolex. She has only a restricted view of where she is walking. Instructions are spoken, which the camera attempts to follow. She searches, hesitates, stops, turns around, tries to find her way, gets stuck, turns around, and again continues walking. More instructions are given; instructions to walk toward a specific direction, to frame the image in a specific way. "Walk straight in—Just keep on going—Head over there—Don't worry about the focus—Try to pick up that body of water up there—Make an about face—Go back to where you came—Shoot into the density of it—Just keep it low—Don't want too much sky. . . ."

Staggering through the overgrown landscape, neither of them has entire control over the film. A critical moment comes shortly before the first roll change. Holt hesitates; she does not know where to go. The swamp becomes dense, the ground muddy, and she is stuck. We can see that she is looking around, trying to find her way. Although

Smithson's instructions become ever more insistent, she goes no farther. The movement of the camera and the spoken instructions become asynchronous: he gives the directive to walk to the right; she, by contrast, films a slow and searching pan to the left. He asks her to continue walking; she stands still. He again tells her to go the right; she makes another pan to the left.

The resulting film, *Swamp* (1971) is a telling response to the kinds of questions that would inevitably be posed later as to who actually took which picture. It is a response with an open end—reflecting a direct question, but one that is ultimately returned back to its sender in the form of a question: Is it necessary to separate and name authors in order to define or understand a work? What would that mean for the various instances of production and the tasks that are collaboratively undertaken?



Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, *Swamp*, 1971. 16 mm film, 6 minutes. Videostill.

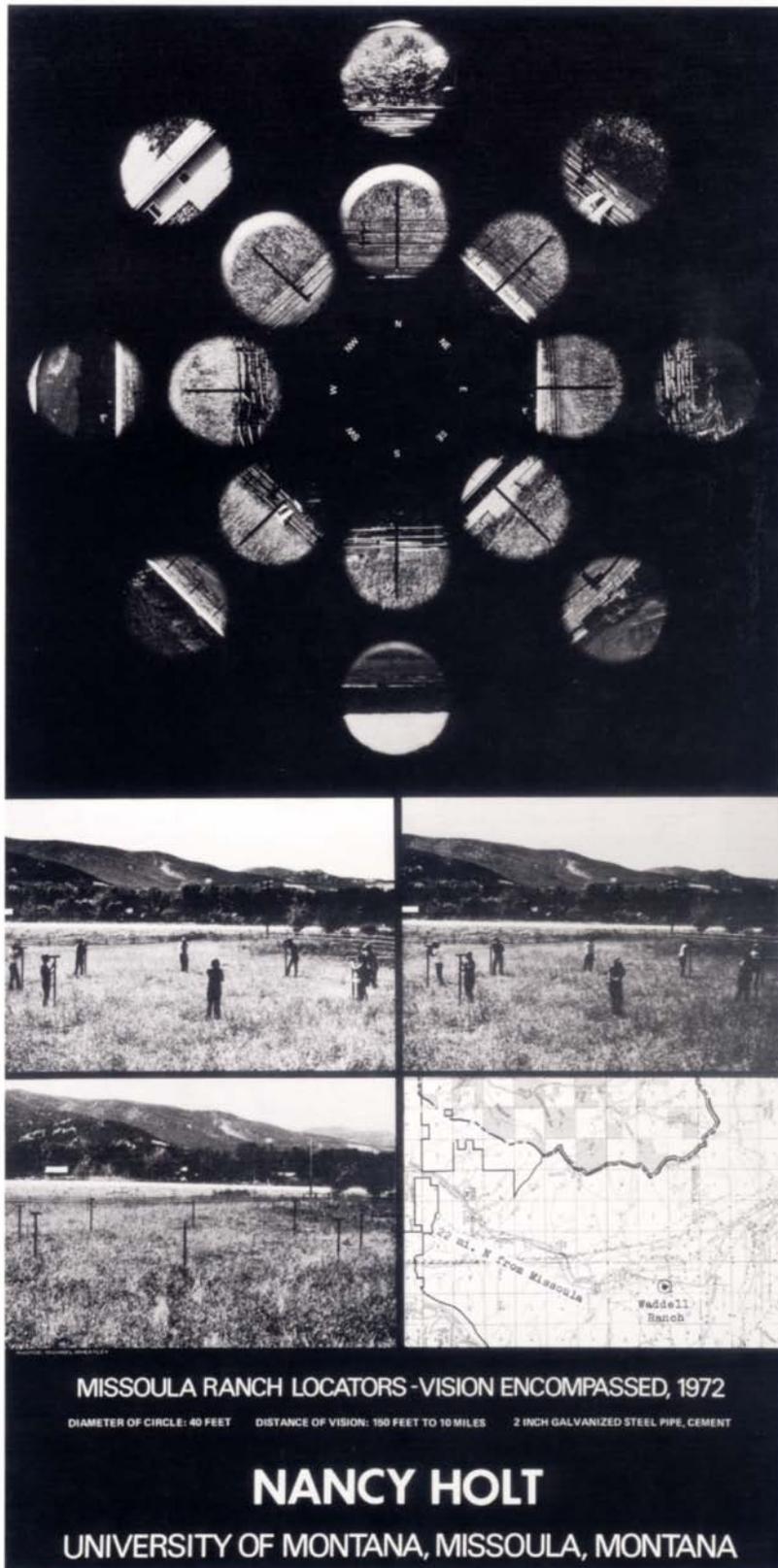
Day Two: Sculptures to Be Looked Through

LOCATORS

A slide sheet in another folder is named *Missoula Ranch Locators, 1972 / Nancy Holt, near Missoula, Montana / Diameter of Circle: 40' / Locators of 2" galvanized steel / Height: 5 ft. / Width: 1 ft.* It contains seventeen slides of *Missoula Ranch Locators—Vision Encompassed*:⁷ eight landscapes, one shot of a locator, or viewing device that Holt created out of a short horizontal pipe set upon a taller vertical pipe, seven views through the locator tubes, as well as one image of people looking through the tubes. In a drawer, we find a poster announcing the exhibition at the University of Montana. It reads as both a factual document and directions for use. Running alongside a map are three photographs from nearly the same perspective—one without spectators, one with spectators looking from outside toward the opposite locator, and one with spectators looking from inside out onto the landscape. The first and largest image is actually sixteen small circular images arranged in two concentric circles, depicting the two possible views through each of the eight locators. “Locators are about focusing,” says Holt, “and excluding a lot from your vision so that you can really penetrate a specific view that has been chosen by the artist. It is art to be looked through rather than looked at. It involves the viewer in a different way than traditional sculpture had.”⁸ As in *Views through a Sand Dune* (1972), Holt begins to transfer views formerly framed by a camera into spatial arrangements. The delimited view in *Swamp*, cropped by the Bolex viewfinder, becomes sculptural; the landscape is framed, cut, and edited. However, the view of the landscape is not in this case encompassed by an ever-expanding horizon; the word *encompassed* instead refers to the radiating points on the compass, as well as the depth of field—ranging from 150 feet to 10 miles. The work’s eight locators offer visitors the opportunity to edit the landscape themselves, taking the camera, as it were, into their own hands.

⁷ *Missoula Ranch Locators—Vision Encompassed* was commissioned by the University of Montana and built in 1972. It was located on a ranch twenty-two miles north of Missoula. The work was dismantled by new owners in the 1990s.

⁸ Nancy Holt, in conversation with the author, May 2007, Galisteo, New Mexico.



Nancy Holt, *Missoula Ranch Locators: Vision Encompassed*, 1972. Poster.

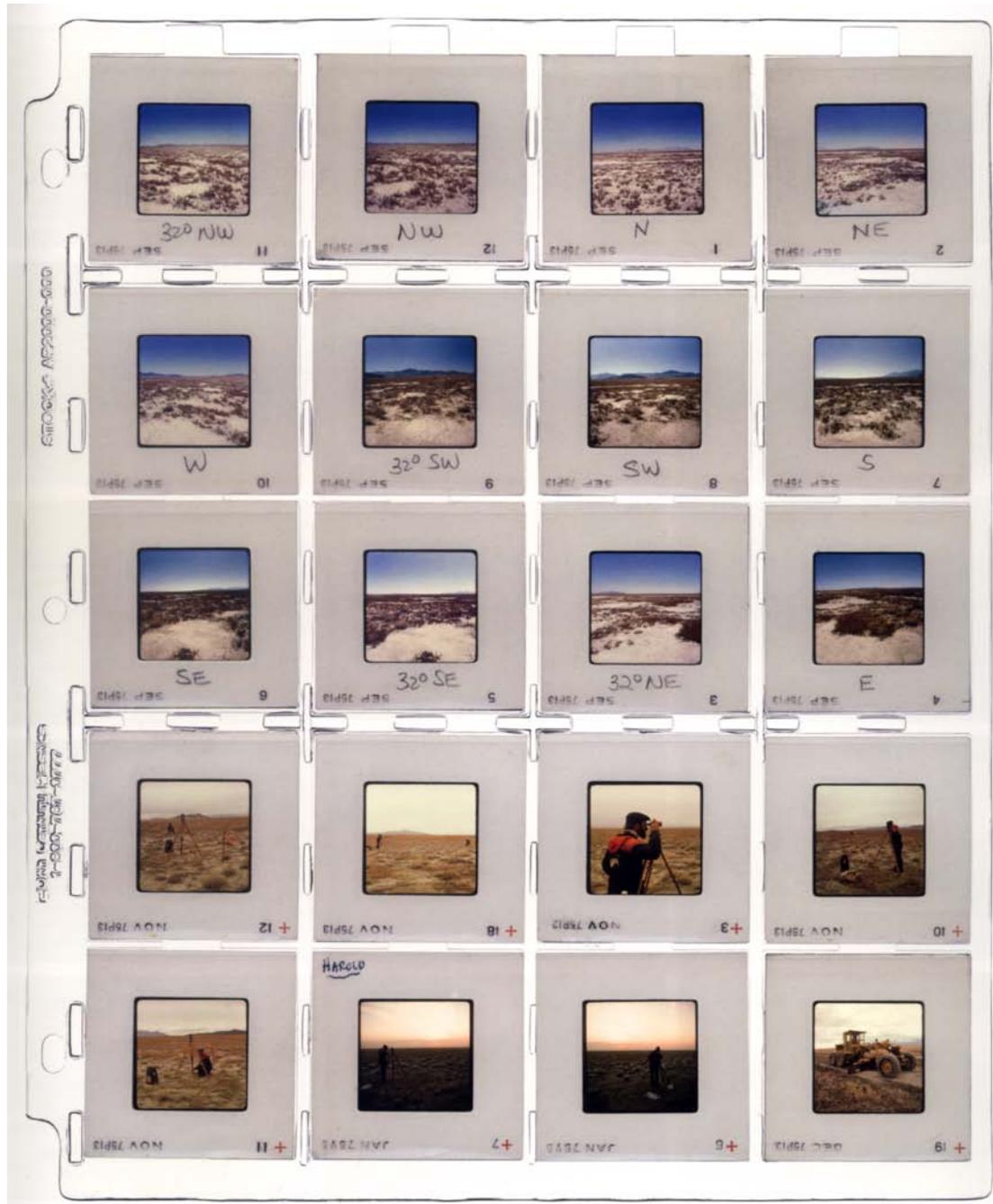
SUN TUNNELS

The first slide sheet for *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76) contains landscape images taken according to twelve distinct points of the compass: N, 32° NE, NE, E, 32° SE, SE, S, 32° SW, SW, W, 32° NW, and NW. Holt photographed them from the center of a parcel of land she had purchased in the Great Basin Desert of northwestern Utah, four miles southeast of Lucin, nine miles east of the Nevada border, and just over an hour by car north of Wendover. This time Holt photographed the space with the help of a surveyor, who also appears on the first sheet of slides. The photographs and geographic data were used to situate the sculpture.

In a later slide sheet, we can see that *Sun Tunnels* is composed of four concrete cylinders. Two pairs of cylinders face one another across two diagonal axes, forming an X. The photographs document the sunrise, centered in one end of the tunnel, and, later the sunset, framed by the opposite end of the corresponding tunnel. On another sheet, we can see that configurations of holes were drilled in the concrete, perforating the surface of the tunnels. Holt explains that each configuration represents a specific constellation of stars: the southwest-facing tunnel corresponds to the constellation Capricorn, the one to the northwest to Draco, that to the northeast to Perseus, and the one to the southeast, Columba.

After the *Missoula Ranch Locators*, Holt built *Sun Tunnels* in the western desert, a place that Holt claims transformed her life. Beginning in 1968 she traveled several times from New York to the deserts of Arizona, Texas, California, Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico; documentation of each trip can be found in the binders in her archive. “You are a small speck in this vast space,” explains Holt, who experiences a need for orientation in the wide, open desert. “You have a vast space, and when you are out in it you can be overwhelmed.” Holt is very much alone in the Great Basin. From her land, no built environment can be seen, except for the occasional train on faraway tracks. There are a couple of hills and, farther away, some higher mountains. Alone in the desert for weeks at a time, Holt resorted to a variety of navigation techniques—orientation becomes a means of existence, a practice in itself. “If you are in this vast space, you are totally lost, unless you have something you can orient yourself toward. This is why the mountains are so sacred to the Indians. You can point to a mountain and that is a landmark. Whatever stands out

in the landscape would become a sacred place. I think this is a human thing. I think it is a very basic need.”⁹



Nancy Holt. Sheet of 126 format slides of *Sun Tunnels* site, 1975.

⁹ Ibid.

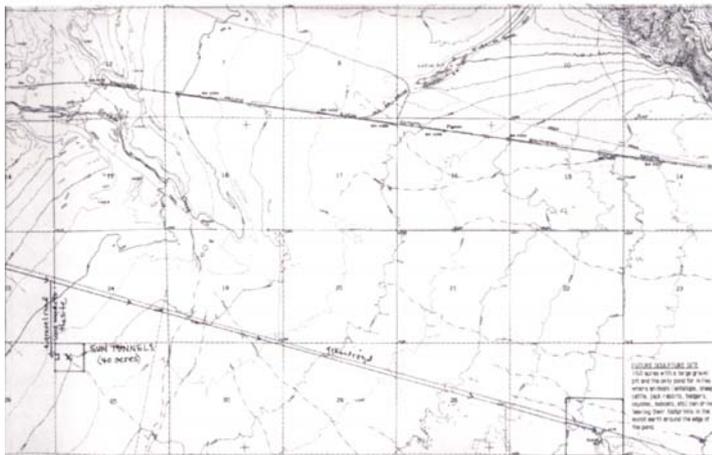
Day Three: Picturing a Claim

In the archive, photographs of *Sun Tunnels* are located in two different folders. One contains preliminary photographs surveying the site and construction shots of equipment and workers. The other contains shots of the completed sculpture. It is the most extensively documented piece in the archive. A number of slide sheets document the tunnels and the course of the sun; some sheets contain only aerial views; three sheets document the sculpture from a distance without any direct reference to the path of the sun; two sheets contain images taken from inside the tunnels with the constellation holes; and on one sheet the surrounding landscape appears framed by the tunnels. The sheets contain square- and horizontal-format images, indicating that Holt photographed with the Instamatic as well as with a 35mm camera, and that the images have been sorted, no longer corresponding to the order in which they were made. Very few of the images contain people. The landscape is deserted. Not a single person stands in or around the tunnels. The course of the sun, rather than the movement of a figure, narrates the temporal sequence that emerges. The photographs depict an abstract space—an empty, unpopulated, otherworldly space—in which the relation between the landscape and the tunnels is difficult to grasp.

On my third day in the studio, Holt received a telephone call informing her that the state of Utah was offering drilling options for gas and oil on a parcel of land near *Sun Tunnels*. This call came just before a pending deadline. Because the sight of drilling derricks and machinery and their impact on the land would be disruptive to the experience of *Sun Tunnels*, Holt mobilises against it. She informs the press, looks into the possibility of leasing the options herself, and makes a public statement. Arguing that the view from the sculpture is a component of the work, Holt claims the surrounding property. “What I can see from my property is part of the sculpture, it should be protected”;¹⁰ the view has to remain clear. The announcement interrupts our research in the archive. Holt shows me the map that she often provides to people visiting her sculpture, marking three separate pieces of property that she purchased

¹⁰ Ibid.

between 1974 and 1976.¹¹ Suddenly, the contested space around *Sun Tunnels*, which has always appeared borderless in photographs, is demarcated with a property line, a demarcation that separates it from the surrounding landscape.



Map identifying three of Holt's parcels of land in the Great Basin Dester, Utah. Two sheets of paper used by the artist for faxing.

¹¹ Holt bought four parcels of land in total between 1971 and 1976 within an approximately five-mile radius of *Sun Tunnels*. The square areas on the map were the result of a nineteenth-century division, whereby parcels along the railroad tracks were alternately assigned to the state and the railroad company. Holt describes the four parcels she bought at the time:

- Nancy Holt's Art Land Parcels // UTAH // Great Basin Desert, Box Elder County:
1. SE/4 of SE/4 of Section 13 Township 3N Range 18W SLM; Containing 40 acres; Purchased August 27, 1971; Contains Rocky outcropping and a section of Bonneville Salt Flats. In 1999, I began allowing CLUI/Wendover to use it for resident artists.
 2. NW/4 of NW/4 of Section 25 Township 7N Range 18W SLM; Containing 40 acres; Purchased August 25, 1974; Site of Sun Tunnels.
 3. SE/4 of Section 27 Township 7N Range 17W SLM; Containing 160 acres; Purchased August 3, 1976; Base of Pidgeon Mountain with gravel pit and water hole.
 4. SE/4 of Section 13, Township 7N, Range 19W, SLM Containing 160 acres; Purchased September 3, 1976; High butte with a 360 degree panoramic view of the desert.

The map is the first document to depict a property line. No boundaries appear in the photographs or in the basin itself—there are no names, no signs, no dates, and no fences. So why does Holt draw the outline of her property on the map but make no indication of the sculpture itself? What does that suggest about the nature of a claim on land?



Mapping the region around the Great Salt Lake, 1849

In an article about the King Expedition that passed through the Great Basin Desert between 1867 and 1869, Alan Trachtenberg examines the historic relation among property claims, maps, and photography in the western territories.¹² He focuses on the survey photographs that Timothy O’Sullivan produced within the framework of the expedition. Trachtenberg describes how the expedition overwrote the Native American way of perceiving the land by assigning new names to places and writing them into maps. “The act of mapping and naming was, in the eyes of the Indians, an act of trespass, not upon property but on religion, upon the sacred itself. The white man’s maps threatened a whole way of life.”¹³ Trachtenberg examines the broader history of the expedition, including its accumulated data, maps, and texts. He is particularly interested in the naming of the individual elements of the terrain—the

¹² Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 119–63.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 125.

hills, valleys, deserts, and lakes—and the process of including them in maps either as illustrations or accompanying photographs. “The name lays claim to the view. By the same token, a photographic view attaches a possessable image to a place name. A named view is one that has been seen, known and therefore already possessed.”¹⁴

The King Expedition was the first to include photography as a means of examining the land, but its function had not yet been defined.¹⁵ O’Sullivan photographed geological formations, topographical views, villages, artifacts, mining towns, waterfalls, and deserts. Later the photographs served different purposes according to various interpretations: sometimes they were treated as pictorial views, other times they gave visual form to abstract, scientific descriptions and data for a larger public that was not educated in reading scientific findings. In such cases, photography was able to mediate the abstract by offering a seemingly coherent image of the unknown territory. It functioned as a “conceptual bridge” between an abstract and a concrete visual mode.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The King Expedition was the first civil exploration in the United States, also called the United States Geological Exploration of the 40th Parallel or, in short, the Fortieth Parallel Survey. It was initiated by the U.S. Congress, led by the geologist Clarence King, and accompanied by, among many others, the photographer Timothy H. O’Sullivan. The expedition had the assignment to “direct a geological and topographical exploration of the territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada Mountains including the route or routes of the Pacific railroad, . . . to examine and describe the geological structure, geographical condition and natural resources of a belt of country extending from the 120th meridian eastwards to the 105th meridian, along the 40th parallel of latitude, with sufficient expansion north and south to include the lines of the Central and Union Pacific railroads.” The project included studies of “all rock formations, mountain ranges, detrital plains, mines, coal deposits, soils, minerals, ores, saline and alkaline deposits in addition to detailed maps of the chief mining districts, and a topographical map of the entire region, barometric and thermometric observations of atmospheric conditions bearing upon the subject of refraction and evaporation.” Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 121, quotes the authorising letter of March 21, 1867, addressed to King, by Brigadier General A. A. Humphreys, Chief of Engineers, Department of War, Group Record 57, Geological Survey of the 40th Parallel, National Archives.

¹⁶ Ibid., 127. Trachtenberg borrows the term from the historian Martin Rudwick:

“Just as the photographs in *Three Lakes* depict the terrain as at once mythical (in the poems) and historical (in the letters), the survey photographs provide a visual parallel to the symbolic forms of the map—what historian Martin Rudwick calls a ‘conceptual bridge’ between an abstract and a concrete visual mode.”



Timothy O'Sullivan, *Mono Lake, California*, Plate 101 from: *Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel / United States Army Corps of Engineers*; Clarence King, geologist in charge. [Washington, D.C.; 187-?], from the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.



Timothy O'Sullivan, *Steamboat Springs, Washoe, Nevada*, Plate 97 from: *Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel / United States Army Corps of Engineers*; Clarence King, geologist in charge. [Washington, D.C.; 187-?], 1867.

Trachtenberg traces the use to which O’Sullivan’s photographs were put in expedition publications and albums. He notes that the “photographs cannot be taken simply as illustrations either of facts or of ideas.”¹⁷ They can be interpreted differently in various contexts and times. For Trachtenberg, O’Sullivan possesses an extraordinary awareness of the images as survey photographs, an awareness that reflects on the representational activities of the survey, which is as much a subject of the images as nature itself. As deliberate acts of framing, even those views devoid of human signs, the photographs represent human inscription on the blankness of nature, equivalent to naming a place. They lend insight not only into the scientific undertaking of the expedition but also into the workings of the expedition itself.

Day Four: The Things One Does with Photographs

Across a vast temporal expanse, Trachtenberg examines the usage of O’Sullivan’s photographs; he shows how the images are employed and which narratives they accompany. With it, he demonstrates how the images are “set-in-function,” how they are used and applied in a specific context, as well as what they are able to delineate beyond that. Until now, only a small sampling of Holt’s photographs have been published. Often they appear in the context of her sculptural work, in surveys of land art, or in the publications on the work of others. Holt is, for the most part, considered a land artist, and her photographs are often assessed as mere supporting material for this artistic work. But Holt’s archive demonstrates that the medium of photography has been integral throughout all stages of her work. For Holt, photography functions like her sculptures, as a viewing apparatus. As such, any impulse to elevate the photograph to the level of sculpture or to dismiss it as incidental would be inappropriate. For Holt, photography is a fundamental tool in her working process—an instrument to survey space as well as time. The resulting archive is a working laboratory tracking its own experiments over the course of time.

On the last day, we came across photographs of the other three lots in Utah that Holt had bought in the 1970s. Holt narrates that she had always wanted to work on those sites but never did so. “I made these photographs and it is a way of seeing the site. I

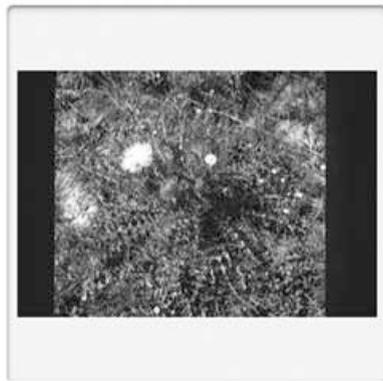
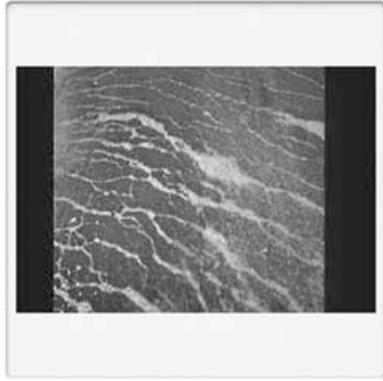
¹⁷ Ibid., 162.

have always wondered if the main reason for never building on them was that I felt the site itself was sufficient; that I loved the site and I bought it—I claimed it. And isn't that enough?"¹⁸ The three parcels of land are sufficient in themselves. But can a piece of land be considered a work of art? Can the parcels of land be added to the list of Holt's finished works? Would a map or a photograph be necessary to express this idea? These questions were raised in our conversations but as yet remain unanswered, both in the archive and in any available publications. On the map that Holt uses to show people how to find *Sun Tunnels*, the other three lots are marked in exactly the same way—as sites belonging to Holt for one to visit and experience. Holt makes these parcels relevant, whether through the placement of a sculpture, through photography, through their depiction on a map, or perhaps simply by giving them a name.¹⁹

Later Holt pulls out a page of slides called *Texas Claims* (1969). It is unlike another series of slides that Holt made documenting western graveyards: there is no fencing of land to be seen, no delineation of personal property visible. In these seven slides that Holt took in Texas in 1970, the land is broken up by light-weight fences and is flooded with water, flowers grow on stones, and we look across open fields. Are these images of nature reclaiming the land, or are these images themselves claims on the land? *Texas Claims* can be understood as a “viewing experiment,” it depicts the working process of the artist as she tests her processes of claiming. The series remains in the archive, and the questions it raises might well remain unanswered. In the archive, it stays in flux, open to interpretation, to future application, or simply as part of a working process.

¹⁸ Holt, in conversation with the author.

¹⁹ Here again, I refer to Trachtenberg's discussion (*Reading American Photographs*, 134): “Diversity of camera angles, of subject, and of geographical locations conveys the idea that the camera itself, the instrument of picture making, can produce various visual results, from close-ups to panoramas. While it makes us aware, through the photographer's control, of natural scenes, it also makes us aware of the photographer's own creativity in choosing what to depict—the human and mechanical activity of camera operator. By the diversity, which calls attention to our dependency for what we see upon the photographer's choices and the camera's position, the pictures raise a question about cognition, the relation between seeing, investigating, and knowing—the question which lies at the base of the survey as a whole.”



Nancy Holt, *Texas Claims*, 1969. Colour transparencies.

What we find in an archive can be surprising, at other times it negates our assumptions, and sometimes it offers an expanded view into the processes of things made. Categorizations, placement, and titles of images suggest specific interpretations, while the knowledge of how images have been used direct our reading. But an archive is also a receptacle for experiments, parenthetical projects, unpublished processes, and images left behind. In Holt's archive, the depiction of viewing experiments, expeditions, finished sculptures, as well as the workings of expeditions and the making of sculptures coexist and continually shift.

While I had started to work in Holt's archive with the brief of the acknowledgement of the work of a female artist, I realized that documents and images by others were part of the archive as well: it was not only Holt documenting the work of Smithson or making photographs of trips with friends, but I also found material that showed how a camera had moved from hand to hand. Thus Holt's archive as well proposed to me that the rendering of an individual artist was a process of decision making—decisions to select and not to select certain materials for the writing of a (hi)story. The materials in Holt's archive at least propose readings of the artist's work that have not yet been articulated.

While moving between images and folders, my position became one of a viewer who herself moved around a body of work, constantly negotiating my evaluation of the materials at hand. Thus the archive itself became a viewing device in which the observer must again negotiate her own position and determine the coordinates of her own point of view.

EPILOGUE

Long after having thought I had finished this text, I came back to a sheet of slides I had forgotten. *Over the Hill (Joan Jonas)* (1968) is a series of fifteen images that are labeled in the archive as *1968 / My Woman in the Dunes / slide work starring Joan Jonas*. In it, a figure seen from the back climbs up a dune and disappears behind a hill. The land is traversed, temporarily occupied, and quickly left behind. The woman is gone. The dunes remain. And a sheet of slides can be found in a folder.



Nancy Holt. Sheet of 35mm slides titled *My Woman in the Dunes*. Slide work starring Joan Jonas. 1968.

Ines Schaber

diabolical tenant

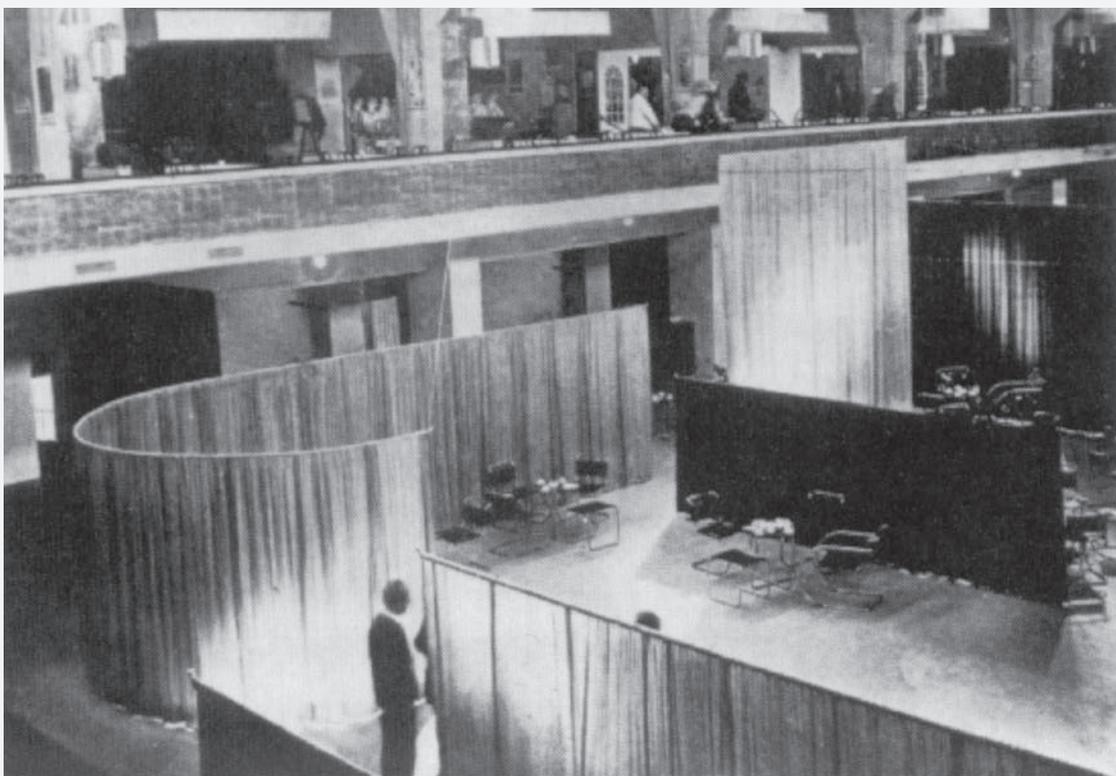
2007

four photographs picturing works by Lilly Reich, two curtains, one preexisting, one installed. spoken dialogue
Installation

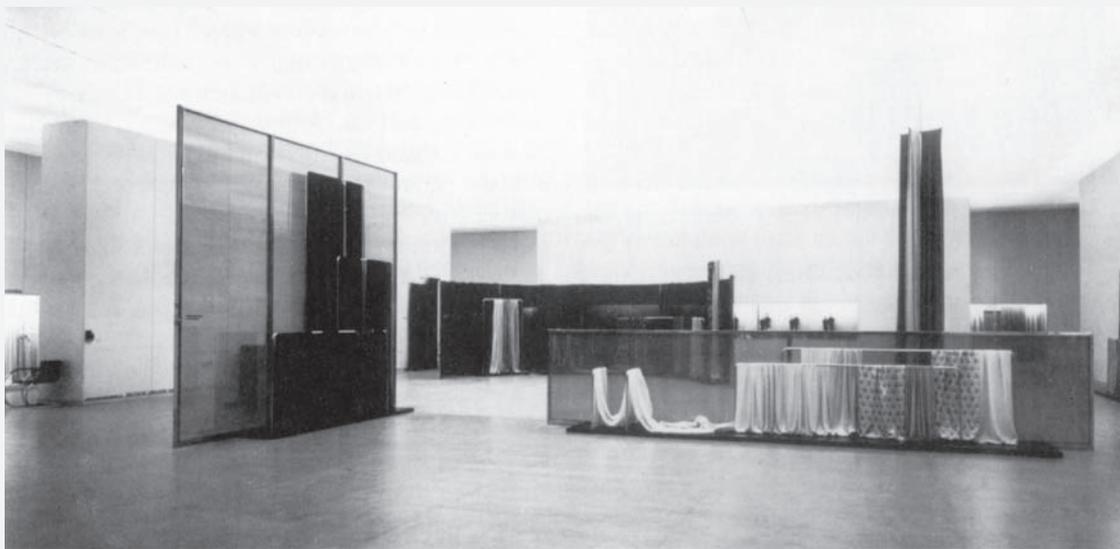
diabolic tenant was an installation at the airport of Tempelhof, Berlin. For the exhibition space, an installation was developed that deals with the enmeshment of political power and design. The starting point of the installation is the work of the architect and designer Lilly Reich (1885-1947) who collaborated on many projects with Mies van der Rohe in the 1920s and 30s. In 1937, their long-lasting collaboration was halted by Hermann Göring when he took control over the German Textile Exhibition in Berlin, removed van der Rohe from his commission and gave it to Ernst Sagebiel, the architect of the airport in Tempelhof. As a result, Sagebiel and Reich developed the design for a presentation of textiles for the World Exhibition in 1937 in Paris. (We don't know of further collaborations between the two.) The question of what happened to the political nature of Reich's work was raised by a few, one of whom was van der Rohe himself, who commented after his immigration to the US: "What is so political about a silk exhibition?" Lilly Reich stayed in Germany, where her entire archive burnt down in 1944, enabling only speculations about a large part of her production today. *Diabolic Tenant* reflects on the question of re-inscription and acknowledgement of a female artist. It uses the very few photographs that exist of Reich's work and installs a dialogue between two curtains on the role of the display and its political function.



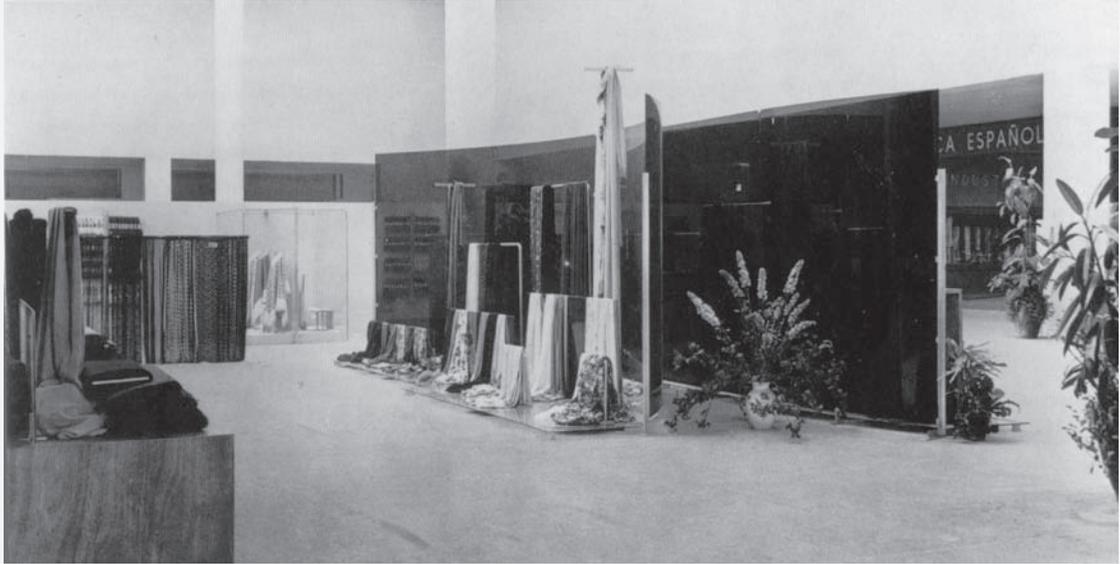
1920 MODEHANDWERK (FASHION AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION), BERLIN
DESIGN: LILLY REICH



1927 MODE DER FRAU (WOMEN'S FASHION), SILK AND VELVET CAFE, BERLIN
DESIGN: LILLY REICH, MIES VAN DER ROHE



1929 INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, GERMAN TEXTILE EXHIBITION, BARCELONA
DESIGN: LILLY REICH, MIES VAN DER ROHE



1937 INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, SECTION ART AND TECHNIQUE OF MODERN LIFE, GERMAN TEXTILE EXHIBITION, PARIS
DESIGN: LILLY REICH, ERNST SAGEBIEL



Cabinet 2: Artwork 158

DIABOLIC TENANT

Text, Audio Installation, 14 min.

SILENCE

BLIND

I have been here for many years.
I have seen many things on both sides. People came, and left.
Lately it became quieter.
Something is about to happen to this place.
I can only vaguely remember how things were when I wasn't hanging in the corner all the time. As opposed to my colleagues in the windows, I haven't been placed like this for a long time. What I see here is puzzling.
What are you doing here?
How did you get here?
Did you put me in this situation?

SILK

(Silence)

BLIND

You hardly talk to me.
There isn't anybody around; we can talk safely to each other.
Nobody is going to hear to us.

SILK

(Silence)

BLIND

... We do know each other...

SILK

(quietly)

I would rather be left alone.

BLIND

We are both hanging in this space though; we have to get on with each other.
Who knows how long we are going to be here together.
.....

SILK

I do not know how I got here. What am I doing here?
... Together with you in this space. I am used to a different setting.

BLIND

We have many things in common.
We organize the relation between inside and outside.

SILK

(declining)

The old myth of inside and outside.
Thereby I am a scheme for a space and you an attribute of it.
In my case it is about structure.
More than separating, it is about creating a new space.
I am part of a scheme that wanted to break with customs; that wanted to interrupt everything that existed until then, and do something entirely new.
Away from everything that was planned for us—a liberation.

BLIND

You are for sure the most elegant installation of all times.

SILK

I was beautiful.
I am still beautiful.
I will always be, beautiful.

And now I am hanging here—as an isolated part—with you,
together, in one room.
I was part of a whole thing. We were five.

BLIND

I thought you were nine.
Five of those conspicuous, colourful, beautiful ones—like
you—
And another four surrounding you, which were nearly
invisible, and not very memorable, yet an important part
of the whole thing.

SILK

We were even more.
The space we created had to be enclosed, which is why we
needed the black velvet ones.
—They were only important to create an environment for
us.

BLIND

(calm) You directed the viewer's attention towards the
inside,
And they excluded everything else.
They were important; I would even say they were
essential.

SILK

They were a compromise solution. A form of transition.
...
The single ELEMENT is essential. It is placed.
Several elements, together, start to define a space, which
to be grasped requires concentration.
One always needs to define a space in order to articulate
something new, without this exclusion, it is impossible
to do so.

BLIND

But this contradicts what you said about seamless space

and volumes without borders.
You always were part of an enclosed space: you were a
presentation for textiles, an exhibition.
Through representing a product you have created a space,
free from common architectural conventions, an elegant
space that—strictly speaking—only aimed at selling
things, but looked like an art installation.

SILK

We wanted to be more abstract,
avoiding individual narrations and focusing on the
products themselves.
No symbolism or constructed associations.
Only things for themselves.
Bypassing the whole estrangement of mass production.
The product was in the center of everything.
The product was the installation.

BLIND

(giggles) You see,
you obscured the character of the commodity...
This whole elegance...
AND: you got rid of all other dimensions!
Things were only shown in their function as consumer
products.
You ignored all other relations like those of production,
of history, and of the conditions of their making.
(slowly, making himself assertive)... No other narration
than the presentation of the commodity.

SILK

We were a project for the future, not for the past.

BLIND

I understand.
However... when I look at you today—even though you still
do look fantastic—you really have changed.

SILK

I am missing the right environment.
I cannot fully express myself here.

BLIND (*summoning up, describing*)

This is what remains of you.
You became an individual piece.
Your overall concept was neglected while your elegance
was appreciated.
You became a background:
For a car, a blonde, or a Hoover.
Champagne can now be served.

SILK

We wanted to bring everything together.
ONE idea, no single narrations, no illustrations.

BLIND

(*dreamy, oblivious of everything around*)
It was wonderful. Just wonderful. Simply wonderful.
(*analysing*)
You projected an *ideal situation*.
I, on the other hand, am not referring to an overall
plan.
I am not going from the textile, to the space, to life
and back.
I am an attribute.
I am solving a problem,
a very practical problem.

SILK

So no more new concepts?

BLIND

No more.
This was not possible anymore.
Everybody agreed on me, and thus we created
consensus.

Everything else was forgotten.

SILK

(*enthusing*)
A space in which one can forget things.
In which one can imagine things.
A space full of beauty.

BLIND

(*analytical*) This looks different today.
You look different today.

SILK

You know so little about me.
Some facts, data, and what can be seen in photographs.
Do you think it is enough for you to be able to talk
about me?

BLIND (*offense starts*)

I know a lot about you.
And I have seen all the photographs that remained.
You are so photogenic.
Were you all only made for those photographs?
Or was it the appropriate medium,
because it could so simply create a frame able to exclude
its surroundings?

SILK

Photographs can mediate ideas very well.

BLIND

(*appreciative*) Everything works really well on the
photographs from 1927 and 1929.
In these one senses an endless interior, as if it would
go on forever,
as if there was no outside, only this one, continuous,
space.
(*analytical*)

but on the photograph from the world exhibition in Paris, there is a mistake. One can see in the corner the lettering of the installation behind ...ca espanol.... that might stand for "...republica espanola...." a few weeks after the attack on Guernica... .. the fact that this is in the picture... means that there, your carefully arranged space did not work. Perhaps the photographer did not grasp your concept. Maybe he was even being subversive? Or did he want to make a comment on you?

SILK
We should have cropped that picture. The attention is drawn to the back. Which is bad. I am generally not so sure about the photographs anymore anyhow. --I am bit sad to be reduced to black and white all the time. Nobody recognizes me. Although I became public so many times. Not only at my spectacular appearance 1927 in Berlin, But also a couple of times before and after that.

BLIND
Was that always you?

SILK
Yes. But my form varied. However, basically, I was always the same.

BLIND
(*descriptive, FLOWING*) In 1920 one could say you told stories, and you were not so elegant, if I am may say. You were rather funny.

There was such a mess around you! You looked like a scarf casually thrown, waiting to be placed around a woman's neck, herself just sitting on an armchair, having also forgotten her hat.

SILK
It was a total muddle.

BLIND
I like it. It is very contemporary.

SILK
There was still too much symbolism in it. The body was not supposed to be represented in the display but in the viewer herself. We got better at that later on.

BLIND
(*hesitating*) Was this at the time when you separated yourself from the surrounding?

SILK
(*impatient*) It is about being precise, not about separation. Besides, those were two different installations.

BLIND
(*clarifying*) We have already spoken about the installations in 1920 and 1927. Ten years later though, at the international exhibition in Paris, In which you were installed in the textile section... I still have many questions about that...

(*SILENCE*)

BLIND

For example...

SILK

I don't want to talk about it
I cannot hear this anymore.
It is not just that it bores me, but the entire
discussion is a dead end.

BLIND

but-

SILK

(tough)

We were been part of an entirely new, simple, but
absolutely elegant and beautiful space.
It was luxurious and provided a model for many.
This space was free of doctrine,
It was not a political space,
It was about products.
The products were congruent with the display.
(tries to calm down)
This was a model. A statement of elegance and beauty.

BLIND

But-

SILK

(angry) No BUTS!
Beauty can have effect,
It can be unpredictable, but conceivably effective.
It can, for example, disarm a furious enemy.

BLIND

(scornful) beautiful idea. And one that obviously didn't
work.
Besides, I doubt you would even recognize your enemies.
(then more sober)
you created a space that had no outside.

Everything was inside.

Hence it was crucial that the people in your
installations would look good.
They were supposed to leave differently than how they
arrived.
They were supposed to change in your spaces.
A transformation machine.

SILK

(tries to stay calm) – This was an effect that was very
important for me.

BLIND

(talks to himself, slowly, whispering) Extraterrestrial.
The claim of beauty coupled with this rationality.
A spaceship.
To forget about actuality.
A moment of apathy.
A spaceship as a veil.
Simply beautiful. Extraterrestrial.

SILK

(calmer) Sometimes the effects of one's work can hardly be
percieved.

And still:

I refuse to consider an installation of silk as being
political.

BLIND

(has enough of her, talks to himself, and whispers)
... as if the order you created would stand above
everything else,
you are a deception in a glass space.
Far away ... and right in the middle of it.

SILK

You need to learn to read me in a more complex way.
I am not language. I am not a phrase.

Don't you have senses?

(pause)

BLIND

How did we get from you to me?

SILK

I do not know what it is that we are supposed to have in common.
I tried to liberate myself from the wall, and was able to release myself from those windows.
You are back to sticking with them.

BLIND

(confident) I am what I pretend to be.
I do not relate to the space, only to this one line.
But...

SILK

But?

BLIND

(still confident) I can alter.
I can play with the space,
with the people, inside and outside,
on both sides of your glass wall.
They become players, actors. Can you see?

SILK

I see NOTHING.
You are in the wrong position.
I am in the wrong position.
It might even be the first time that somebody listens to you.
And the only reason for this being that I am there. What am I doing here?
I want to leave.

It stinks in here.

... but I have been here before ...
... if only I could remember when ...

BLIND

(quieter, assertively, without emphasis)
You forgot about something

.....

and please do not mention yet again that we have nothing to do with each other.
Subtract 5 and add 10.
THIS is how we come from me to you.
(PAUSE)
(whispers)
... I hate champagne...
(quietly)
why does history repeat itself as a farce?

**Cabinet 3:
What is Missing?**



Cabinet 3

What is Missing?

C3_Quote by Michel Foucault on “subjugated knowledges.”

C3_Introduction Artistic ways to deal with what is missing—One: Recreate parts that are erased (Oppenheim)—Two: Historical critique of the archive (Sekula)—Three: Creating and reflecting upon an archive at the same time (Nicholson)—The case: Didi-Huberman and the photographs of the *Sonderkommando* in Auschwitz—Making images despite all—Didi-Huberman versus Lanzmann—The archive as a place of “permanent lack” versus the archive as a “place of storage”—The personal and the general—Images that do exist (Barthes)—*Punctum, studium* and the *blind field*—Things that are there, but not in the picture—The ghostly and its implications (Gordon)—Its implications for dealings with the archive (Alloula)—Images that should not have been made—Towards a practice of watching?

C3_Image Series of images called “killed”, produced as part of the photography section of the WPA project in the 1930s and 1940s in the US—Erasure and control—The archive has it all.

C3_Essay: Who is Speaking There? Examples of inclusion—Gifts and comments—Where is the place for the voice of the documented? What happens if the one who is documented starts to speak for him/herself?

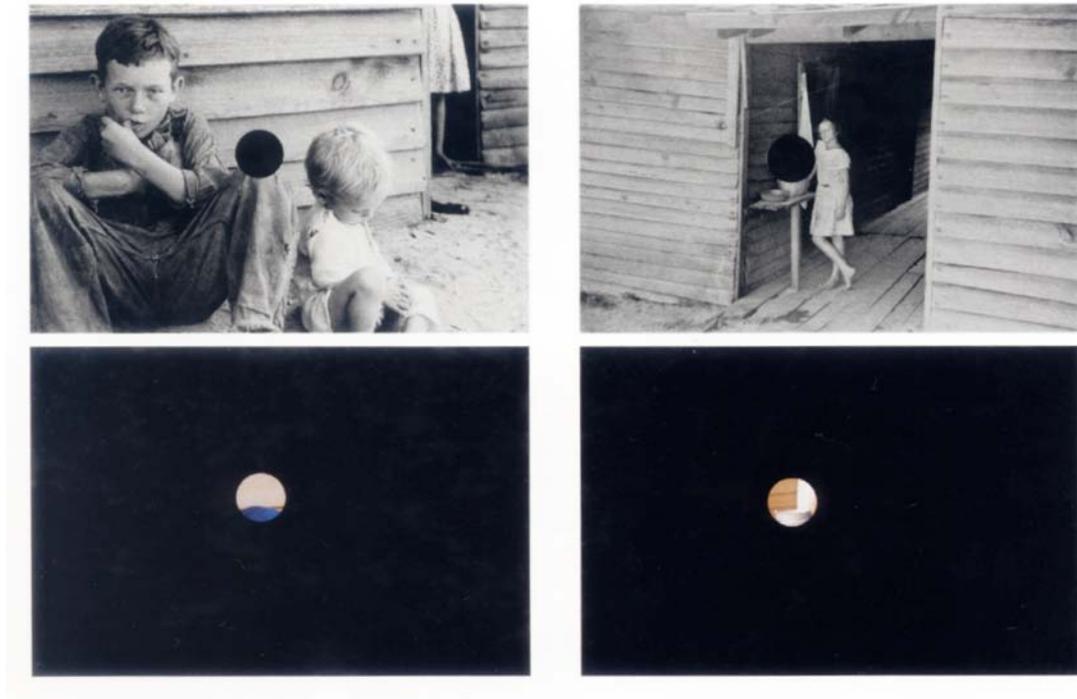
C3_Work: Pente and Schaber_Unnamed Series Three out of nine takes on an encounter of Aby Warburg with the Hopi Priest Cleo Jurino in Santa Fe in 1898—An image as personal memory becomes a document—Reactions and dealings—*Unnamed Series: Part 1*: What is the importance of a representation of a site in which something important has happened?—*Part 2*: How to deal with images that should not have been made, or should not have been published?—*Part 7*: How can we redefine or rearticulate the space of the secret that is contained in every image?

“When I say ‘subjugated knowledges’ I mean two things. On the one hand, I am referring to historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systemizations. ... Subjugated knowledges are, then, blocks of historical knowledges that were present in the functional and systematic ensembles, but which were masked, and the critique was able to reveal their existence by using, obviously enough, the tools of scholarship. ... When I say ‘subjugated knowledges’ I am also referring to a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity.”¹

¹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975–76* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 7.

Cabinet 3: Introduction

What is Missing?



Lisa Oppenheim, 'Killed Negatives, After Walker Evans', in *Blind Spot 39*, 2008.

A few years ago the artist Lisa Oppenheim published a work in which she displayed photographs that Walker Evans took on a commission for the FSA,¹ yet none of his photographs capturing the Great Depression, which have since become 1930s icons, were among them. Instead Oppenheim chose photographs that the head of the program, Roy Stryker, had “rejected.” In his role as head of the Historical Section (Information Division) of the Resettlement Administration, Stryker wrote short outlines for the photographers regarding what they were supposed to do and how they were supposed to photograph. He described how to frame pictures, how to place

¹ Lisa Oppenheim, *Killed Negatives, After Walker Evans* (2002–2006 / 2007)

people, work-sites and landscapes within them, which angle to take, and what the emotional outcome of the pictures was to be. Every roll of film photographed for the FSA had to be handed in on Stryker's desk, and he went through the contact sheets and negative rolls himself to comment, select, and finally also to "kill." "Killing" was the official term used by Stryker to describe the process of excluding an image from further use and publication. Some were only given the name "killed," some were scratched, others were "punched." Nonetheless, in the 1990s, when the Library of Congress, in charge of the images today, transferred a large part of the analogue archive to a digital database, all of the FSA images were scanned. The killed images too became open to public view.

In her work Oppenheim displays photographs made by Evans that were subsequently punched by Stryker and flanks them with images that reconfigure the parts of the photos erased by the punch, thus revealing a detail that one can imaginarily rejoin with the original images. The reproduction and making-accessible of that which was "eradicated," however, probably isn't the most interesting moment in Oppenheim's work. Indeed this moment lies the work's allusion to the probable falsity of the claim that Stryker managed to completely annihilate photographs—a claim that has aroused significant critique time and again in discussions of the FSA's photographic initiative. For not only have the cancelled, punched, and supposedly annihilated negatives survived; they have meanwhile become available online. The figure of the departmental head as sovereign ruler over the pictures has been negated by the more bureaucratic figure of the institution, and the program director's gesture of control over the pictures and their publication is tacitly subverted by the archive.

Besides being reliant on a critique of the idea of social documentary photography and its gesture of world betterment, the critique of the production of the FSA's images was, above all, reliant on Stryker's role as well as the supervision he exercised on the images. But the archive seems, at least as far as the erasure of several images is concerned, to have made itself independent of Stryker: despite all, it eluded his control and preserved the images. Both Oppenheim's work and the Library of Congress's activity of retrieving the supposedly erased images and making them public point towards a fundamental gesture of the archive: we expect the archive not to "forget" anything; we imagine it to be complete.

COMPLETENESS

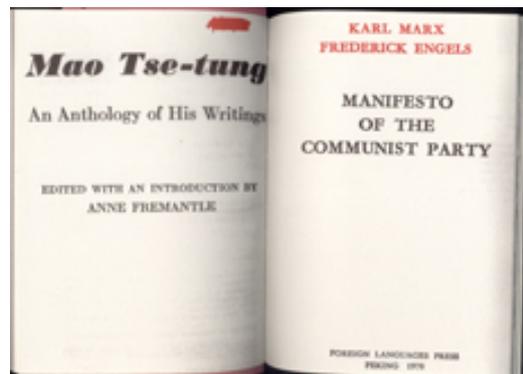
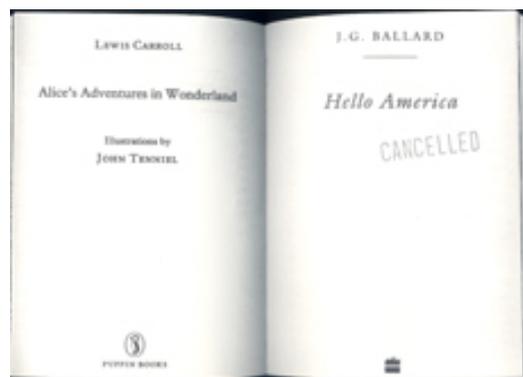
Where Oppenheim's work reconstitutes a specific image archive and to a certain extent reconciles this archive with itself, Allan Sekula criticises the image archive in general from a historical viewpoint. Archives are, for him, anything but neutral; instead they embody the power inherent in accumulation, collection, and hoarding as well as in the dictates of the lexicon and the rules of language. Within bourgeois culture, the photographic project itself has, for Sekula, from the very beginning been identified not only with the dream of a universal language, but also with the establishment of global archives and repositories according to models offered by libraries, encyclopaedias, zoological and botanical gardens, museums, police files, and banks. According to Sekula, "archival projects typically manifest a compulsive desire for completeness, a faith in an ultimate coherence imposed by the sheer quantity of acquisitions. In practice knowledge of this sort can," according to Sekula, "only be organized according to bureaucratic means."² Yet the organisation of the archive's images, as much as the bureaucratisation of its procedures, also has an impact, as Sekula writes, on the images themselves. Whereas photographs in general are, in comparison to films, fragmentary and incomplete utterances in which meaning is directed by layout, captions, texts, site and mode of presentation, in the archive pictures are anatomised, isolated in one way and homogenised in another way. Hence archives establish an order between single images, which "liberates" and abstracts them from the contingency and richness of use and thus produces a loss of context, establishing a "relation of abstract visual equivalences between pictures."

Invited to reflect on the archive of the commercial photographer Leslie Shedden in the coal mining town of Cape Breton,³ Sekula names two common options for dealing with and evaluating this kind of archive: to view and treat the images as historical documents or to treat them according to the aesthetic value of each individual image. The two options reflect two imperatives of photographic culture. In the first, photographs are considered evidence belonging in the field of

² Allan Sekula, "Photography between Labour and Capital," in Benjamin Buchloh (ed.), *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures* (Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 197.

³ Ibid.

science, showing objective truths. In the second, they belong in the field of art because they enable subjective experiences. These two modes of dealing with and evaluating images might render the contradictions visible that are at stake in Oppenheim's work and in the supposedly missing images of the FSA. On the one hand Stryker's position and his personal evaluation of the images of the FSA signal a person who is in control and enacts an aesthetic as well as ideological program with and through the images. On the other hand the archive is liable to another logic: its obligation is that of containing and keeping a history that can be traced back through historical documents, even if they are out of focus. The archive's official rule is to keep and not to evaluate. Sekula has thus identified the question "what is missing" as an institutional normative of the archive that strives for completeness.



Tom Nicholson, *After Action for Another Library*, exhibition Humboldt University, Berlin, 2003.

Where Sekula critiques the operations through which the archive acts and proposes dealings with photography outside archival modes, the Australian artist Tom Nicholson uses those very modes of operation as the basis for a project named *After Action for Another Library* (2003), which was realised in response to a political incident. After the East Timorese people's vote for independence in 1999, the Indonesian army withdrew, after it burned every book it could find. Not just the books in public and university libraries, but also the bookshelves of private individuals were dragged onto the street and burned. As an activist who joined an East Timor solidarity group while studying at the Drawing College of Arts in Melbourne, Nicholson was asked by friends in Dili for English books to replace those lost. Working from their lists, he launched a private aid campaign, soliciting language primers, dictionaries, books on veterinary medicine, literature, politics and the arts. "From the beginning, it was conceived to have a parallel function. The traces which that process of collecting books generated would become an image of a set of histories: the history of resistance in East Timor, the history of the relationship between Australia and East Timor, and also a meditation on what it was to begin again."⁴

From the collection of the books emerged two linked works. Photographs of a burnt-out library which Nicholson took in Dili in 1999—with the metal rings of lever-arch files lying in twisted piles on concrete shelves—were blown up and put on billboards across the street from Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, New Zealand. Next door at the Pakuranga Library a table display contained copies of an artist's book Nicholson made from photographs of 130 title pages of some of the 5000 books he sent off to Dili. The book opens with Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and encompasses a broad range—of the Melbourne-University-educated leftist persuasion—including Orwell, Kafka, Descartes, *Alice in Wonderland*, Ballard, Beckett, Marx and Lenin, and two copies of Huxley's *Brave New World*.

In his work Nicholson manages to move between and along two primary activities often thought to be separated. He is an active member of a group founding a library, and at the same time he reflects the group's activities and the donors' choices of books through photographing their titles. The creation of another library

⁴ Tom Nicholson in an interview, published in the *NZ Herald* on Saturday, March 26, 2011.

not only makes the choices of the donors visible in its totality; it also renders their limited selection perceivable—and things come to mind that are absent although they should be there. The work thus becomes another library that reflects and makes readable the conditions of its own making.

All three practices described above refer in very different ways to the relation the archive has to the completeness of the material it houses. Therefore, they also give answers to the question of what is missing: Oppenheim depicts what Stryker erased from Evans' pictures. Her work can be seen as an attempt at exemplarily restoring the archive and the work of the FSA in its totality. Sekula, in contrast, criticises a certain completeness that the archive strives for and also the way images are handled in this context. His historically formulated critique prompts him to seek a practice outside the archive in his own artistic work. Nicholson, on the other hand, finds a form for connecting a criticism of the archive to a practice within it. His work does not strive for a totality; it makes the boundaries and ideologies of the selection process visible.

So how do we think about what is missing? Is it the structural and institutional conditions of the archive, which enable particular activities within the archive while disabling others? Or will there, indeed, always be images and voices whose absence we will always feel, images whose absent traces are not a result of the incompleteness of a discourse of a collection but rather register other voices, unveil complicated production processes, or exhibit instances of multiple authorship?

ARCHIVE, IMAGE, AND READER

One of the most widely known discussions of the question of what is missing is found in the debate sparked by Georges Didi-Huberman's text dealing with four photographs from Auschwitz.⁵ According to Didi-Huberman, these four pictures, taken in Auschwitz in August 1944 by members of the *Sonderkommando*, stand as

⁵ For more about the debate on the four images of Auschwitz and their meaning for the discourse around the archive, see also Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Gérard Wajcman, "De la croyance photographique," *Les temps modernes* 56, (2001): 47-83; Élisabeth Pagnoux, "Reporter photographe à Auschwitz," *ibid.*, 84-108.

examples of what has been absent from the archives until now: representations from the victims' viewpoint, photographed at the greatest of risk, intended as "*signals to be emitted* beyond the borders of the camp,"⁶ showing "the need to snatch some photographs from the *real*,"⁷ "to snatch from human thought in general, thought from 'outside,' something *imaginable* that no one until then had even conceived as possible."⁸ For Didi-Huberman the four photographs are "tiny extractions from such a complex reality, brief instants in a continuum." They are "truth itself, meaning its vestige, its meager shreds: what remains, visually, of Auschwitz."⁹ He believes that confronting these images means being responsible to those who made them *in spite of all*, in the face of death.

His critics (or adversaries, as they are called in the German translation) not only reject his handling of the four pictures, but also negate the legitimacy in general of representing the Shoah through images. Especially for Claude Lanzmann, who refused the use of any archival images whatsoever in his film *Shoah* and focused exclusively on letting survivors speak for themselves, archival images in general are "images without imagination,"¹⁰ pictures that transport nothing more than information. For Lanzmann, there are no images of this discrete and extreme reality, only language and the memory of the victims. Indeed, Lanzmann sees the archive as being linked with the gesture of providing evidence, a gesture that is superfluous in the context of the Shoah since for him the Shoah requires no proof. In his critique Lanzmann progresses from a description of his conceptual decision making process within the framework of the production of *Shoah* to general statements about the archive, generalising the specific approach he took in the making of one film, and turning "the rigor," firstly, as Didi-Huberman writes, into a "discourse, then dogma, and finally, rigorism."¹¹ The decision against using archival material in one single film is thus universalised. Lanzmann "sets about providing answers himself, universal and absolute answers on *all* of the Shoah, *all* the archives, *all* the images,

⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

all the cinema.”¹² Legitimate decisions are transformed into objectionable rules. As Didi-Huberman writes, “While it is legitimate to let the survivors of the extermination speak, it is wrong to conclude that archival images teach us nothing of the ‘truth,’ and that attentive questioning of images amounts to no more than a cult of icons.”¹³

For Didi-Huberman, Lanzmann’s assertions stem, among other things, from the fact that we often ask too much and too little of the image.

Ask too much of it—‘the whole truth’ for example—and we will quickly be disappointed: the images are merely stolen shreds, bits of film. They are therefore *inadequate*: what we see . . . is still little in comparison to what we know. . . . Or else we ask too little of the images: by immediately relegating them to the sphere of the *simulacrum* . . . we sever them from their phenomenology, from their specificity, and from their very substance. In every case the result will be identical: the historian will continue to feel that ‘the concentration camp system cannot be illustrated’; that ‘the images’ whatever their nature, cannot tell what happened.’ And that the concentration camp universe simply cannot be ‘showable’ since ‘there exists no “truth” of the image, any more for the photographic, filmic image, than for the painted or sculpted one.’ And so historicism manufactures its own unimaginable.¹⁴

According to Didi-Huberman, however, a picture is neither *nothing* nor *all*. He opposes the hierarchisation of approaches that is formulated by his adversaries, for it contains the impossibility of continuing the questioning, of producing a future image inasmuch as it erects its own archive as a monument. Worse still, it disqualifies the other archives and degrades them to the level of documents whose truth quotient is called into question fundamentally, disregarding, as Didi-Huberman writes, “the necessity of a *dialectical approach* capable of handling both speech and silence, both flaw and remains, both the *impossible* and the *in spite of all*, both testimony and archive.”¹⁵

Working in the archive, however, requires a different understanding. For Didi-Huberman the archive is no storehouse where we are invited to help ourselves as we wish, but rather a “permanent lack.”¹⁶ As a consequence, not only does the

¹² Ibid., 93.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 32–33.

¹⁵ Ibid., 104.

¹⁶ Didi-Huberman refers here to a concept developed by Arlette Farge.

archive intrinsically require both a different way of being handled and a different understanding than the one Lanzmann describes; the researcher too has a duty in that he must position himself in relation to the archive, its documents and images. “An image without imagination is quite simply an image that one didn’t spend the time to work on,” Didi-Huberman writes. “For imagination is work: that *work time of images* acting ceaselessly one upon the other by collision or fusion, by ruptures or metamorphoses—all of these acting on our own activity of knowledge and thought.”¹⁷ The archive—an often unorganised mass at the outset—does not become meaningful “unless it is patiently developed.”¹⁸ Therefore what Didi-Huberman feels is missing is not only the four pictures from Auschwitz, which represent the victims and their struggle to make images of the Holocaust, but also the recognition of the work in the archive, a work that produces, only through the arduous effort of reconstruction, connections between the images and archives. What is missing is a particular understanding of this work with the archive, with the images and facts, a work that Didi-Huberman, in kinship with Walter Benjamin and Jean-Luc Godard, understands as a work of montage. What is missing is an understanding of the image not as document, but as act through which the researcher enters into a relation.¹⁹

READER, IMAGE, AND ARCHIVE

Still, how could a practice inside the archive manifest itself, a practice that comprehends the archive as permanent lack rather than storehouse? How to recognise and generate, in the midst of the archive’s regulated dealings and mechanisms of order, an understanding of the image as act? How not only to enable the activity of the researcher, but perhaps also integrate it into the archive’s mechanisms?

¹⁷ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 116–119.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹ Is it any wonder that Didi-Huberman opens the text to his adversaries with words of Sartre? “The whole problem is born of the fact that we *have come to the image with the idea of synthesis* . . . The image is an act and not a thing.” Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’imagination*, 1936, quoted in Didi-Huberman, 50.

For Didi-Huberman these questions are linked to a challenge to art history and its tone of certainty. Art history makes, in his understanding, a science “based in the last resort on the certainty that the representation functions unitarily,” a science that “is able to translate all concepts into images, all images into concepts,” In the end, “everything lines up and fits together perfectly in the discourse of knowledge.”

²⁰ For Didi-Huberman, however, when looking at images and objects of art it is necessary to know, but also to think non-knowledge when it unravels the nets of knowledge.

Roland Barthes tried to link science and subjectivity by inventing, as he put it, a new science for each object. To draw on his reflections on photography in answer to the question “what is missing” may seem circuitous at first glance, for his strategy is an attempt at approaching photography differently without subjecting it to empirical, rhetorical, or aesthetic classifications which are “in any case external to the object” and “without relation to its essence.”²¹ In a different vein, in order to find out what photography was intrinsically and through what essential features it distinguished itself from other images, Barthes resolved to start with a small number of photographs that he was confident existed for himself: “nothing to do with a corpus: only some bodies.”²² Barthes never tried to employ specific photos in any reduction of a subject to the bodyless, passionless social being with which science is preoccupied. In contrast, his attempt opens out onto reflections of a new scientificity: a science that uses each individual object, respectively, as a starting point; an attempt at articulating “the fundamental feature, the universal without which there would be no Photography,”²³ using a few personal impulses as a point of departure while still scrutinising photography despite its ostensibly unclassifiable character.

Still, how to universalise the personal that exists for Barthes when watching images? How to make it understandable? How to generalise when it is individual photographs rather than photography *in general* that one wants, and is able, to talk about? How, as Barthes writes, to “remonstrate with . . . moods, not to justify them; still less to fill the scene of the text with . . . individuality; but on the contrary, to

²⁰ George Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2005), 3.

²¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 9.

offer, to extend this individuality to a science of the subject, a science whose name is of little importance . . . provided it attains (as has not yet occurred) to a generality which neither reduces nor crushes”²⁴.

Barthes proposes concepts that he detaches from the process of watching images that are existent in his own eyes. The first term he introduces is the *studium*, which can be “more or less successful, depending on the photographer’s skill or luck, but it always refers to a classical body of information”;²⁵ it means “an application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity.”²⁶ The *studium* expresses polite interest and “is that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste.”²⁷ To recognize the *studium*, writes Barthes, “is inevitably to encounter the photographer’s intentions, to enter into harmony with them, to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the *studium* derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers. The *studium* is a kind of education (knowledge and civility, ‘politeness’) which allows [one] to discover the *Operator*, to experience the intentions which establish and animate his practices, but to experience them ‘in reverse,’ according to [one’s] will as a *Spectator*.”²⁸

The *punctum*, on the other hand, is the item that breaks or punctuates the *studium*. The *punctum*, commonly being a detail in a photograph, “rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [the viewer].”²⁹ A photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks (but also bruises, is poignant). Whether or not it is triggered, it is an addition: “it is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*.”³⁰ The *punctum* is involuntary; and nevertheless, through it photography effectively transcends itself. Ceasing to be a sign, photography proceeds to annihilate itself as a *medium*—it is rather the thing itself. However lightning-like it may be, the *punctum* has, “more or less potentially, a power of

²⁴ Ibid., 18.

²⁵ Ibid., 25.

²⁶ Ibid., 26.

²⁷ Ibid., 27.

²⁸ Ibid., 27–28.

²⁹ Ibid., 26.

³⁰ Ibid., 55.

expansion.”³¹ A second *punctum* which Barthes meets with at the close of the text is no longer one of form or detail alone; rather, this *punctum* is denseness—time: an experience of the *it-was-once-so* which can overtake one while watching any photograph.

Barthes goes further, however: through the *punctum* arises an exterior of the image, a *blind field*. “When we define the photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not *emerge*, do not *leave*: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies. Yet once there is a *punctum*, a blind field is created (is divined).”³² Barthes example for a *blind field* is a photograph of Queen Victoria made by George W. Wilson in 1863:

She is on horseback, her skirt suitably draping the entire animal (this is the historical interest, the *studium*); but beside her, attracting my eyes, a kilted groom holds the horse’s bridle: this is the *punctum*; for even if I do not know just what the social status of this Scotsman may be (servant? equerry?), I can see his function clearly: to supervise the horse’s behavior: what if the horse suddenly began to rear? What would happen to the queen’s skirt, i.e., to *her majesty*? The *punctum* fantastically “brings out” the Victorian nature (what else can one call it?) of the photograph, it endows this photograph with a blind field.³³

The person who steps out of the picture lives on (as in film, where the projection screen act as a hiding place, the same screen which gives the person who steps out of it the possibility to continue living). For Barthes the existence of the *punctum* enables a living-on of that which has been in the photograph, the photograph’s *has been*, which is able to cross over into another time and another field by means of some thing (a detail), or by virtue of time itself. It lives on.

Avery Gordon, who draws on Barthes’s observations for her description of the photographs of the desaparecidos in Argentina, broadens this: “The blind field is never named as such in the photograph. How could it be? It is precisely what is pressing in from the other side of the fullness of the image displayed within the frame; the *punctum* only ever evokes it and the necessity of finding it. Yet the *blind*

³¹ Ibid., 45.

³² Ibid., 57.

³³ Ibid.

field is present, and when we catch a glimpse of its endowments in the paradoxical experience of seeing what appears to be not there we know that a haunting is occurring.”³⁴

A photograph animates him and he animates it. A haunting is occurring. A person steps out of a photograph like a ghost.

The *punctum* shoots and evolves personally. Barthes’ examples have a different effect on me: the images don’t bruise me; the *punctum* doesn’t get hold of me; nothing steps forward out of the image. Avery Gordon has a different example. She sees a group portrait of the participants of the Third Psychoanalytic Congress in Weimar on September 21-22, 1911. A woman, Sabina Spielrein, who should be part of the Congress, is not pictured. She is missing. But Gordon knows she should be there. *In seeing that she is not there* Gordon feels the need to change her own direction: “I was on my way to a conference with an abstract and a promise. But then I got distracted by a photograph and had to take a detour in order to follow the traces of a woman ghost.”³⁵

Gordon’s *blind field* arises between her knowledge about the congress, on one side, and, on the other side, Spielrein’s relationship to Freud and Jung—and out of the contemplation of a photograph. For me, here shoots a *punctum*, and here arises a veritable *blind field*. Yet the description of the materialisation of this field is different than Barthes’. It arises through a discrepancy between what Gordon knows and what she sees (or what is absent even though it should be present). It is the field of the in-between which comes into existence neither through knowledge and information alone, nor through a mere photograph. It exists through the coexistence of both of these and expresses the space of their in-betweenness, there where neither is present and where they nonetheless meet.

To perceive this in-between space, a (special) observer is required who must be capable of recognising, of perceiving the space between knowledge and seeing, but also of allowing it to exist. “To write a history of the present requires stretching toward the horizon of what cannot be seen with ordinary clarity yet. And to stretch

³⁴ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 107.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

toward and beyond a horizon requires a particular kind of perception where the transparent and the shadowy confront each other.”³⁶ But this stretching can be dangerous, and it has the danger of changing you. Because “to be haunted and to write from that location, to take on the condition of what you study, is not a methodology or a consciousness you can simply adopt or adapt as a set of rules or an identity; it produces its own insights and blindnesses.”³⁷

But how to come back from this place? How to continue from this place without going crazy? How to give a place to what is found and perceived? When Barthes finally finds a picture of his mother that, for him, expresses her essence, he finds peace, a tranquillity in contemplation and a satisfaction at having found *it*. For Gordon, on the other hand, the question only begins at the point when she is touched by something. It is not a matter of having found something again, or of finding peace; it is a foundational question of “how to keep going.” Gordon’s experience of the *blind field* seeks a form of praxis that can deal with this question. “It is sometimes about writing ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a counter-memory, for the future.”³⁸ The same place where Barthes essentially remains in the personal constitutes Gordon’s point of departure. “To repair representational mistakes” and “to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place” is a different project than Barthes’, even though both of them begin by looking at a photograph that animates them.

How to keep going? What to do? Looking at a photograph as evidence of something real is different than seeing it, as Barthes does, as “emanation of a past realness,” as magic and not as art. “Society is concerned to tame the photograph, to temper the madness which keeps threatening to explode in the face of whoever looks at it.”³⁹ To limit photography in such a way that permanently overwrites the *blind field* would also mean to equally deny the symbolic and affective moments of photography as

³⁶ Ibid., 195.

³⁷ Ibid., 22.

³⁸ Ibid., 195.

³⁹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 117.

well as the time through which it speaks. Indeed, photography possesses both moments: evidence and affect, general and personal, *studium* and *punctum*. Photography *mediates these*: it is (a) medium. If we understand photography as medium, then we see that the archive has a different role and function. No longer is the archive merely an institutionalised collection of images, rather it is an in-between space and a process in which single mediators (or images) intermediate between individuals and institutions, social structures and subjects, and between history and biography.⁴⁰

THE ABSENCE OF IMAGES THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE

Malek Alloula's attempt to deal with a series of colonial postcards is an example of a practice with images that either should never have been made or otherwise should have been counteracted by images that are missing. Alloula felt disturbingly haunted by a collection of photographs, a series of colonial picture postcards that were taken of Algerian women during the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century. In his book *The Colonial Harem* Alloula conjures the disappearance of these postcards⁴¹; for in his opinion not only were they extensively involved in the exertion of colonial violence, they also even prolonged its ramifications. For Alloula the photographs of these women should never have been made, yet their continued existence forces him to find a way to deal with them. And so he attempts, with a delay of many long years after the historical events, to return the postcards to their sender.

What I read on these cards does not leave me indifferent. It demonstrates to me, were that still necessary, the desolate poverty of a gaze that I myself, as an Algerian, must have been the object of at some moment in my personal history. Among us, we believe in the nefarious effects of the evil eye (the evil gaze). We conjure them with our hand spread out like a fan. I close my hand back upon a pen to write *my* exorcism: *this text*.⁴²

⁴⁰ See Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 19.

⁴¹ Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5.

In order to return the postcards to their sender, Alloula displays the pictures “for the last time.” In his book the photographs do not appear as single postcards, but as a collection; and through the addition of the text the photographs gain another frame. The text acts on them, changes them, and it alters our view of them. And even if Alloula does not fully accomplish what he hopes for—the disappearance of the images—the images are transformed. They are no longer the images of women appropriated by the colonial gaze and placed in poses. They are endowed with a vis-à-vis, one that defends itself, that repudiates the gaze’s appropriative gesture.

The symbolic practice that Alloula exerts on the images in order to eradicate them or at least to change our view of them is not, however, able to find an entry into an archive. And how could it? Retroactively commenting on documents is not understood as a practice that normally finds a place in archives, and so Alloula’s cries of rage reverberate outside of the archive. Still, in passing, he mentions one more possibility for how the wounds that today are still produced through the images could have been avoided:

To track, then, through the colonial representations of Algerian women—the figures of a phantasm—is to attempt a double operation: first, to uncover the nature and the meaning of the colonialist gaze; then, to subvert the stereotype that is so tenaciously attached to the bodies of women. A reading of the sort that I propose to undertake would be entirely superfluous if there existed photographic traces of the gaze of the colonized upon the colonizer.⁴³

What does he mean by this? What could these missing photographic testimonies and this crossing of opposing gazes produce? What would the existence of photographs that would make the crossing of the gazes comprehensible mean for us today? Would their existence give rise to the possibility of not only seeing the women as objects, but also seeing those who fixed their gazes onto them, who tried to become their “master” by means of the photographs, taking the women with them like plunder and even multiplying them? Could one, through the crossing of gazes in such images, address the cries that Alloula emits very much later at those who would be visible in these photographic countershots? Would we be able to recognise the addressees at

⁴³ Ibid., 5.

whom Alloula's postcard would be aimed, the postcard that he would not, for all this, even send?

Alloula's text is introduced as being a substitute for photographs that should have been taken but never were. His text emerges because there appears to be no specific response from the colonised to the coloniser about the postcards, no obvious images that could confront the photographs of the women, or make their gazes visible, no images that expose or identify the persons that took or commissioned the photographs. However, this absence of images necessitates a further and perhaps also a continuous working with images, maybe not in order to eradicate them, as Alloula proposes, but instead to give them an accompanying commentary, which allows those who are wounded by the colonial gaze a countershot.

The intersection of gazes, the existence of a photographic reckoning, and the commentary on the gaze of the documenter by the documented are themselves absent most of the time and are often painfully missing.⁴⁴ Yet the critique of this absence not only describes a fundamental questioning of a standard practice in photography; it also proposes a broadening of an archival practice which ceases to place images-as-monuments into an historical framework and instead understands continuous work with images as a part of a praxis geared to the archive.

WHAT IS MISSING?

Most of the time, the answer to the question what is missing in an archive is understood as a lack of images that an archive would like to acquire or add to their collection. In recent years though, the discourse of the archive has added a series of important thoughts to the question from other standpoints: Sekula has articulated a critique of the archive as an institution that strives for completeness and thereby neglects the work on the image itself. His critique points toward the institutional dealing with the question of what is missing and tries to propose other practices with photography. On the other hand, the archive has triggered a discourse, in which

⁴⁴ See also the discussions around the image of the *Migrant Mother* discussed in Cabinet 2: Introduction.

an understanding of the image as act, instead of the image as document, was proposed. Instead of images as historical monuments, the work of montage among images was formulated (Didi-Huberman). Instead of the archive as storehouse, an understanding of the archive as permanent lack was adopted (Farge). Furthermore, suggestions have issued from the discourses surrounding documentary photography, introducing the role of the photographer, the viewer, and the documented into the discussion of the archive (Azoulay). Equally, the thinking around the photographic image, how it is personally read and how the process of its reading can be put into words, as proposed by Barthes, has challenged the reading of images in general and the archive specifically (Gordon).

These proposals for a change in the understanding of the image archive referred, however, mostly to the work *emerging from* the archive, and less to how the changed understanding of the archive, of the images within and the praxis emerging therefrom, should also perhaps alter the archive itself. How, for example, might archives do justice to an understanding of the “image as act” or “photography as medium”? How might other voices surrounding the production of images be embraced by the archive? Where might the place in the archive be where the documented could speak out? And an image archive that feels obligated not only to scientific fields but also to potential affective and blind fields—how might it look?

Answers, or attempts at dealing with these challenges, have been given primarily outside the archive. Yet in order to give consideration to the practices within the archive and the challenges they pose, the archive would also have to be capable of changing itself: It cannot be the mere object of examination. It must itself become a part of the operations which attempt to deal with the problems raised.

Who is speaking there? Or When the Documented Starts to Speak



It is said that the essence of the attempts to link documentary filmmaking with contemporary politics in 1960s and 1970s France concur in one single scene, filmed in front of the Usines Wonder in Paris in 1968 at the end of a strike. It is also said that Jacques Willemont passed by the factory with the cameraman Pierre Bonneau coincidentally, having only 10 minutes of film left in the camera. With it they caught a moment when a woman refused to reenter the factory and resume her work. Her anger, her refusal, and her insisting voice get to the heart of what was tried and discussed at the time: at the centre of the disputes between the proponents of *cinéma vérité* and *cinéma direct* lay the question of what role filmmakers should undertake. Should they merely observe and document, or provoke a situation and incite a scene? Should the position of the filmmaker be visible? Should it reveal itself? Or should they try to let the situation speak for itself? What are the possibilities for reflecting these questions in the making of a film? And how could one complicate the acts of documenting and representing the people involved or affected? Should one find new ways and forms of production, where the material and the films themselves reflect on the fact that there are different voices that need to find their own form of representation?

The history of the approaches that deal with these questions is long. And one

could say that the most convincing experiments have solidified in times of political struggles. I remember Dziga Vertov.¹ And I remember Boris Medvedkin.² But a specifically dense period of controversy transpired in the late 60s in France: the États Généraux du Cinéma³ was created. Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin formed The Dziga Vertov Group.⁴ The Ciné-tracts,⁵ a format of politically engaged short films in which a larger group of filmmakers took part, was launched. Chris Marker founded SLON,⁶ a production studio and a filmmaking collective. The films produced by those groups made visible a variety of experiments that deal with questions of authorship. They choose the relation between the two sides of the camera as the subject of their films. SLON yielded perhaps one of the most important of these films—*À bientôt, j’espère*—part of an entire series that also includes the films *Classe du lutte*, *La charnière*, and *Die Kamera in der Fabrik*.⁷

Marker and several of his colleagues at SLON shot this film to support the big strike at the Rhodiacéta/Rhone-Poulenc factory in Besançon. In *À bientôt j’espère* Marker gives voice to the workers; a sparse, purely informative commentary

¹ Dziga Vertov (1896–1954), Russian filmmaker.

² Alexander Iwanowitsch Medvedkin (1900–1989), Russian filmmaker.

³ For three weeks in May and June, 1968, the assembly Les États Généraux du Cinéma (General Situation of French Cinema) interlocked with the demands of protesting students and workers, seeking to promote “the revolution in the cinema” by both developing ambitious plans for a drastic reformation of the French film industry and backing the efforts of radical students and workers to make their own films.

⁴ The Dziga Vertov Group was formed in 1968 by politically active filmmakers including Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin. Their films, according to many, were informed primarily by Brechtian forms, Marxist ideology, and a lack of personal authorship. The group, named after 1920s-30s Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov, was dissolved soon after the completion of the 1972 film *Letter to Jane*. Some critics observed that Godard and Gorin actively encouraged the equation between the Dziga-Vertov Group and political activity in France through numerous pronouncements and interviews, none of which show much solidarity with, or indeed mention of, other political film-collectives. Indeed, of all intellectuals and film technicians, the Dziga-Vertov Group members never made any attempt to open up their internal processes to workers and non-filmmakers, which established the basic contradiction that eventually split the group: they were intellectuals making films that praised workers and criticised intellectuals, even though the those films were viewed by and large by intellectuals, not workers.

⁵ The Ciné-Tracts (1968) project was undertaken by a number of French directors as a means of taking direct revolutionary action during and after the events of May 1968. Each of the Ciné-Tracts consists of 100 feet of 16mm black and white silent film shot at 24 FPS, equalling a projection-time of 2 minutes and 50 seconds. The films were made available for purchase at the production cost, which at the time was fifty francs. Roughly two hundred films were produced.

⁶ SLON, or the Société pour le Lancement des Oeuvres Nouvelles (Society for Launching new Works) was founded in 1967. SLON’s principle of working collectively outside the organisational hierarchies of the film industry would soon connect with the project of democratizing access to the tools of filmmaking so that dissenting groups could express and communicate their own values and ideas, rather than being spoken for by media professionals. See Catherine Lupton, *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future* (London: Reaction Books, 2005), 110–111.

⁷ *À bientôt j’espère*, Chris Marker, France (1968), 16mm Film, 43 minutes; *Classe de lutte*, Groupe

subordinates itself to what the strikers have to say. In the 16mm film *La Charnière*, having recorded only the sound of the discussion just after the presentation of *À bientôt j'espère*, one voice criticises the filmic gaze as “too romantic” and still “situated outside the working class.” In the DVD box *Les groupes Medvedkines* published by the Editions Montparnasse in 2006, one can see all of the Medvedkin group’s films and listen in on the screening of *La charnière*. Some more comments on the film:

I think that the director is incompetent. . . . And I think rather, I say it roughly as well, that there is simply an exploitation of the Rhodia workers by people who supposedly struggle against capitalism!

There is no moment in the film, I think, where a worker raised the problem of discipline inside the factory that makes one a victim. . . . and the work of women doesn’t appear in your film. This is also maybe a gap. . . . and also our solutions, because we have still some solutions, here, they are not tackled at all. . . . For the first time, or one of the few times, the workers appeared on the screen. Even if there are uncompleted aspects—which seem missing for us—it asks the problems, it will bring inevitably someone to get hold of what is missing and explain it. . . . I personally think, I say it frankly, Chris is a romantic. He saw the workers’ unions organization with romanticism.

Subsequent to this screening a dozen workers founded a film collective called Groupe Medvedkine. In their first film, *La classe du lutte*, the group shows Suzanne Zedet, already filmed in *À bientôt j'espère*, who joins the union and commits herself to the politicisation of her colleagues. The film is a response as well as a continuation of the first film, producing an educational film on the contradictory relation between filming and being filmed. Yet another step in the series of responses is the film *Die Kamera in der Fabrik*, in which German NDR producer Hans Brecht edited a version of the two films in 1970, re-narrating a commentary by Marker. In it, Marker explains, “At the time, the workers of Rhodiacéta saw my film for the first time, a discussion started. Some said this film could be a weapon, others commented that the most important thing in the film was missing: the political prospect. The workers were complaining that one could only see the odds and ends and the outcome—the strike—but not the overall context. One would not be able to see the things that had changed for the people. The process of the change of awareness would not be visible.

Medvedkine, France (1969), 16mm Film, 37 minutes.

And that would be a mistake.’⁸

The films in the series build and comment on one another. The way they speak to each other, though this interrelation is rarely articulated in a direct sense, allows one to discern the discussions and questions raised, which included: What is the relation between the form, the medium, and the political struggle? What is the larger context for making these films? What was it like to stand, for the first time, on a box in front of the factory and make one’s voice heard? How did this change one’s life? And—who is speaking? Together the films create a space, a territory where a crossing of various voices and positions occurs, a search for a method of using film as a weapon and a tool for enlightening people. “The beginning was,” says Marker, “to learn to see. The group wanted to make a movie about the change of consciousness. They needed equipment and money. And then, one day, the group had its first editing table.”

BUT WHAT HAS CHANGED?



⁸ Chris Marker voiceover in Chris Marker and Groupe Medvedkine: *Die Kamera in der Fabrik*,

This history still resonates today, but how to learn a technique and finance a camera and an editing table is a question that has fundamentally changed. In the early 2000s, the artist Raphael Grisey started to work on a film about Bouba Touré, a friend of his mother's. Touré came to Paris in the 1960s from Mali. For some years he worked for Renault and then became a projectionist at the Cinéma Entrepôt in Paris. Touré started to photograph in the immigrant housing blocks in the 1960s and has since then documented nearly every part of his life with his camera, including the living and working conditions of migrants in France, the movement of the Sans-Papiers, and the emergence of the cooperative Somankidi Coura in Mali, which he co-founded in the 1970s. In a first version of Grisey's film, shown among others at Oberwelt in Stuttgart, Germany, the twenty-minute two-channel video installation focused on the cooperative. Somankidi Coura was founded along the river Senegal in Mali in 1976 by a group of migrants from West Africa who had worked in France at the time the struggle of the Sans-Papiers began. The cooperative started on a sixty-hectare territory with only fourteen men and two women. Today more than two hundred persons live in the cooperative. At the beginning, land was worked collectively; later parcels of land were given to individuals or small groups. In this first 2008 version of the film, it seems that the activities of the cooperative keep on expanding, from the work in the fields to the construction of a water system or the selling of products at the nearest big city. The film does not mention that the cooperative also founded URCAK (Union Régionale des Coopératives Agricoles de Kayes).

For Grisey, it is not only Touré's life in Paris, but also the broader aspects and perspectives of the politics of migration that inspired him to travel to Mali several times. After various versions of the film,⁹ an ever-expanding work, Touré gives him a present: a videotape. It is one of the first videos Touré has ever made. He has hardly used a video camera before, but he is capable of putting the technical medium in action in an immediate way. The site where the video takes place is his

France (1970), 16mm Film, 88 minutes.

⁹ Versions of the double video installation *Coopérative* by Grisey: *Coopérative* (2007), Video, 20 minutes, shown at *Rendez-Vous*, Les subsistances, Lyon, France, 2007; and *Karambolage*, Oberwelt, Stuttgart, Germany, 2008. *Coopérative* (2008), 78 minutes, was shown at contemporary art center of Chelles Les Églises 2008.



home, a two-room apartment with hundreds of photographs, posters, and keepsakes on the walls. On the floor, piles of documents, photographs, and stacks of negatives in paper envelopes appear. Touré films along the walls and narrates, "My dearest photos are displayed. All the photographs you are watching are photographs from my life. Photographs that I took for myself or for others." The thirty-minute video, shot in two takes, is led by the images on the wall. Touré links many political struggles of the last 50 years with his life, showing and speaking about them. We see Amilcar Cabral, "the great African hero killed by Portuguese imperialisms," and the cooperative Somankidi Coura, including a photograph from friends of the cooperative with the main tool, the daba—"the image of Africa created by Europe." We see a painting of Touré with his mother—"the importance of recording one's life and activity"; a poster of Chirac with one of "our dictators, the ex president of Togo" that says, *Non à la guerre en Irak, Oui à la dictature au Togo*. Toure shows us a poster of the film *Soweto*, of the films *L'argent*, *Les nuits de la pleine Lune*, *La vie est un roman* and *Zan Boko*, a film about Modibo Keita and Sékou Touré. A poster of Thomas Sankara, "killed because he wanted to create another relation between France and Africa." A piece of cloth picturing Nelson Mandela along with questions addressed to him are followed by images of demonstrations in Paris, political posters, "which speak, which say something," and letters from the family asking for money.

Grisey adds only one thing to this present given to him: the title:

Bouba Touré, 58 rue Trousseau, Paris, France.



The rhythm, the relation between image and voice, the story continuously influenced thereby, and the relation between an image memory and a personal history allow for little interference, re-editing, or comment. Grisey has to leave the piece almost as it is. He only makes two cuts. Touré's narration has its own rhythm. After some time he enters a condition of speech that reminds me of a dance. While repeating certain lines, he catches his breath, giving himself time to make up his thoughts:

It is because the African consciousness falls asleep again. It is because the African consciousness falls asleep again. It is because the African consciousness falls asleep again.

I am crying. I am crying. I am crying. I am crying.

Africa will wake one day and will say stop! Africa will wake one day and will say stop! Africa will wake one day and will say stop! Africa will wake one day and will say stop!



I am triste. I am triste. I am triste. I am triste. I am triste.

The clock must ring. The clock must ring. The clock must ring. The clock must ring.

Yes. The battle. Yes. The battle. Yes. The battle. Yes. The battle.

Life is a battle. Life is a battle. Life is a battle.

In a version edited in 2008 Grisey expanded the material, adding newly filmed scenes from the cooperative in Mali as well as older ones from Touré's life in France. At the present the video installation has expanded to a length of seventy-eight minutes; and in addition to showing life in Somankidi Coura, Grisey adds a scene of a deserted colonial village in Mali and observations of Touré's political life in Paris, his job as a projectionist, his work as a photographer, and his engagement in the immigrant community, the latter being visualised by Toure as he delivers a slide



lecture about the cooperative in an immigrant housing block in Paris. Sometimes the two channels expand the field of vision by showing the same scene happening twice. Sometimes they assemble diverse narrations in the same space, and sometimes they produce a collision between diverse activities and spaces. On the right projection, for example, Touré leaves his house in Paris, while on the left projection we see images of him arriving at the cooperative in Mali.

GREETINGS FROM THE OTHER SIDE

The series of films and documents around Rhodiacéta originated as a group of works in continuous conversation with one another, each one attending to questions that were raised by the one before. Everything at stake has been put on display, questioned, and expanded in different versions time and again. Together, next to each other or one after the other, they create a space that unfolds the discourse around the role of the author, the rules of how to shoot a documentary, the situation of showing films, the changing roles of positions and activities. Everything seems to have been questioned and invented anew.

In *À bientôt j'espère* there is a scene where a worker arriving in the middle of an interview situation greets not only his friends around the table but also the cameraman. Following the common rules of documentary filmmaking, the scene would have to be cut. But SLON leaves it in. It becomes a commentary which addresses not only the person behind the camera but also us as viewers of the film, reminding us that we participate in the events taking place.



A comparable scene is in Grisey's 2008 version of the film on the cooperative. It shows him standing together with Touré in front of a termitarium somewhere on the soil of the cooperative close to a banana plantation. Grisey had intended to destroy it, but Touré prevents him from doing so, arguing that they should *do everything to conserve nature and keep as many termitariums as possible*. He tells Grisey to “just film them” and explains: “With this soil they build . . . You don't have to destroy them. Is that clear?!” In the scene Touré instructs Grisey not only in how to handle termitariums, but also how to film.

Touré's own video, which is created in an entirely different political atmosphere than the SLON films, not only channels the subject of Grisey's work but also, most importantly, is a gift for Grisey. He is allowed to do whatever he wants with it. Looking at the two videos, it seems that the struggle to expand on given notions and rules of filmmaking is missing. It feels like the experiments set in motion by the struggles nearly forty years ago are too easily adoptable today. That is why Grisey does not keep the gift to himself. He shows Touré's video in the same exhibition as his two channel video installation. The two videos, shown in two separate rooms of an exhibition space, reflect on different aspects, but communicate through what one could call a political struggle set in motion by a friendship.

EPILOGUE

While Touré prepares to leave his house, Grisey films him from inside the apartment. Touré puts on his coat, takes the key, and opens the door; he leaves, closes the door, and locks it from outside. The camera, now locked inside, continues to film and records the slowly fading sound of the footsteps.

Stefan Pente, Ines Schaber

Unnamed Series

Part 1: Invited by Stefan Pente and Ines Schaber: Karen Peters 2008

8 photographs, letter

Part 2: An approach to address something that one would have never dared to say anything about; except through symbolic practices 2008

Video installation (18 minutes)

Unnamed Series is a series of works by Stefan Pente and Ines Schaber inspired by an encounter that Aby Warburg had with the Hopi Priest Cleo Jurino in Santa Fe in 1898. *Unnamed Series* works on a series on aspects that this famous encounter poses for us. *Part 1*: What is the importance of a representation of a site in which something important has happened? *Part 2*: How to deal with images that should not have been made, or should not have been published? *Part 4*: Which images would we like to multiply and distribute ourselves? *Part 5*: What is the logic of a viewed image? *Part 7*: How can we redefine or rearticulate the space of the secret that is contained in every image? *Part 8*: What would another symbolic practice of an image be? And *Part 9*: What is the answer to Part 1, asked again?

In Autumn 2007, at a studio visit of an artist friend, Stefan Pente and Ines Schaber happened on a series of contact sheets by the photographer Karen Peters. They are told that Peters had been visiting and documenting several historical sites in New Mexico, USA in the last years. Researching the history of the State photographically, Peters was now off again, and had left the sheets behind. Eight of them, showing the site of the former Palace Hotel in Santa Fe, caught Pente's and Schaber's attention. As one of the first hotels of the town, it had burned down in the 1930's. Before though, and responsible for its gain of high visibility, it was the place where Aby Warburg, art historian from Germany and creator of the Mnemosyne Atlas, met Cleo Jurino, priest of the Chipeo Nanutsch, who made a drawing for Warburg explaining him the serpent dance. Speculating about Peters' motivations to photograph the site in Santa Fe and about the readability of the images as such, Pente and Schaber decide to get in contact with her. They had known the famous story of Warburgs' encounter with Jurino for some time and been in correspondence with his lecture Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians

of North America. This lecture was held on April 21, 1923 in the sanatorium Bellevue in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, where Warburg was hospitalized, being diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. For Pente and Schaber, the lecture and the accompanying slide show poses questions about the translation of experiences. In their solo- and collaborative work, they investigate in how far a site of experience is important as a signifier as soon as that experience is communicated to others. They explore the question how the making of images of those sites corresponds to the need and desire to collect souvenirs – souvenirs of events that are reportable, of events whose materiality has escaped and might only exist in the invention of narrative. In his own words, Warburg was not able to talk about the experiences with the serpent dance in his healthy time. He could only speak about it in a place of dis-placement (*ver-rückt sein*).

Stefan Pente, Ines Schaber
Berlin, Germany

To
Karen Peters
C/o Damon and John
New York
Per mail

Berlin, May 15th, 2008

Dear Karen,

Please excuse this unusual form to get in contact with you. We would have preferred to meet you in person, but considering all of our travel schedules this seems the better way to get in touch with you.

Last year, we happened on a series of your contact sheets that you had left at Damon and John's studio in New York, who told us that you had again left to document further historical sites in New Mexico. It was as well this series, specifically eight contact sheets of them, that caught our attention. They document the site of the former Palace Hotel in Santa Fe. As far as we know, this first hotel of the town had burned down in the

1930s and from then on, several diverse buildings had been constructed there. The way you photographed them, excludes any doubts that you had not known what you were picturing.

For a long time we have been working on the relation between scientific and symbolic practices; on encounters and passings into unknown territories where one would have to leave one field and cross to another, moments in which our learned tools would no longer function, and where we would have to learn another language. Aby Warburg's work, specifically his lecture on the serpent dance is important for us in this respect. While visiting the Hopi area and observing their rituals in search for an understanding of the symbolic gestures of 'primitive' cultures – he had this one crucial encounter for his future work in his room at the Palace Hotel. It was in there and not in the villages (where he observed the dances for example) that Warburg received Cleo Jurino, the priest of the Chipeo Nanutsch, who made him a drawing explaining him the serpent dance. This hotel, not as such but in a wider sense, had crossed our work time and again.

As the story goes, the drawing became an important reference only much later; at the time Warburg prepared his lecture Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America in 1923. It was the time and the place, when he was hospitalized in Kreuzlingen, being diagnosed with

paranoid schizophrenia. In his own words, he was not able to talk about the experience with the serpent dance in his healthy time. He could only speak about it in a place of dis-placement (ver-rückt sein). Being accounted healthy later, Warburg called the lecture and his former dealing with the subject the “gruesome convulsion of a decapitated frog,” “formless and philologically unfounded,” which might have value only “as a document in the history of symbolic practices.”

He made sure that in his lifetime, the lecture and photographs were not published. We, of course, are extremely interested in this notion of symbolic practices. What is the material, the information package, of which only a little drawing is left? Who was the sender of this material? Who the original recorder? And why are we receiving it? We assume you know the story as the lecture has been around for a while. Some of the photographs of the lecture and other images Warburg made on his travel have only recently been published. Looking at them, we are wondering in which relation one could see these images to his experience and practice of scientific observation; to his understanding, his way of searching, but as well in relation to the massive influence this trip had on his life. Should we consider these photographs snapshots or souvenirs? Scientific observations or tourist capturing, recordings or proofs?

Could we read, not only the lecture, but as well its accompanying images

as part of a symbolic practice? And could we consider your photographs of the site of the former hotel as well as part of a symbolic practice? Do you consider them documents or souvenirs? And is collecting documents part of scientific-, and collecting souvenirs part of symbolic practice? Do your photographs point to the absence of an experience, or to the disappearance of the site, the experience was made in. And how is the experience one makes related to a site anyway?

Sorry, for imposing all our questions on you at once. The reason why we are writing to you is that we are planning to work around those questions, showing it in Brussels this year. Speaking about it and developing the work, we were wondering if you could be interested in showing your photographs as part or adjoining our installation there. For us, it would be a great expansion of our thoughts in relation to photographic practices and their symbolic gestures.

Furthermore, we would have the chance to develop a conversation around those questions in person, or maybe through the work.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

All the best

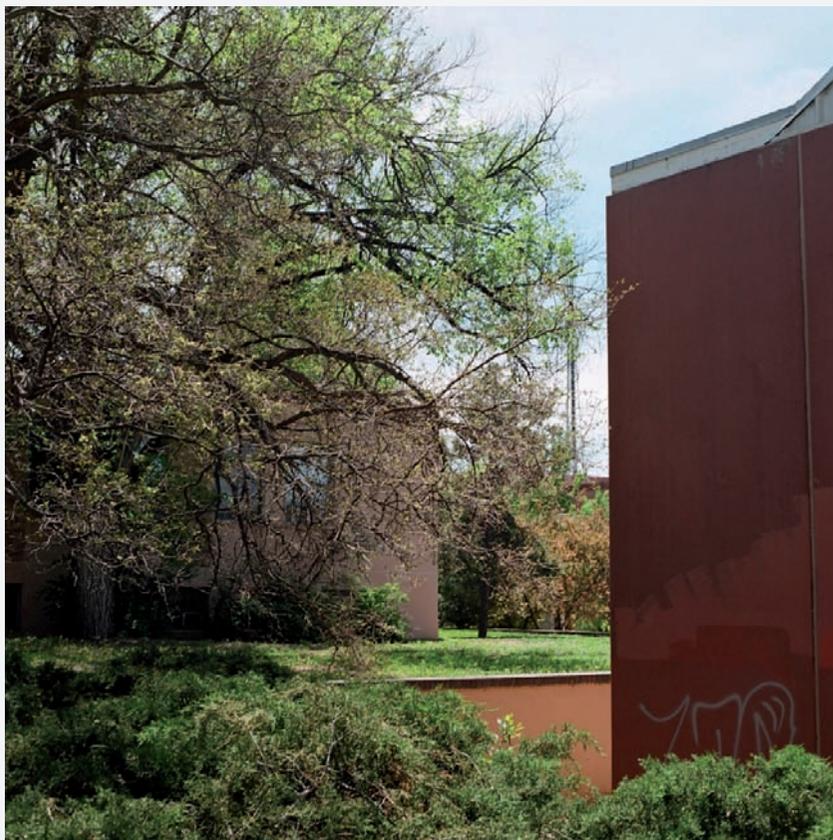
Stefan and Ines



STEFAN PENTE, INES SCHABER. FROM: AN APPROACH TO ADDRESS SOMETHING THAT ONE WOULD HAVE NEVER DARED TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT; EXCEPT THROUGH SYMBOLIC PRACTICES. (VIDEOSTILL)



KAREN PETERS: SANTA FE, SITE OF FORMER PALACE HOTEL, # 63, #14, #15 (THIS PAGE), #45, #46, #3, #98 (FOLLOWING PAGES) (2007)



Cabinet 3: Artwork 203



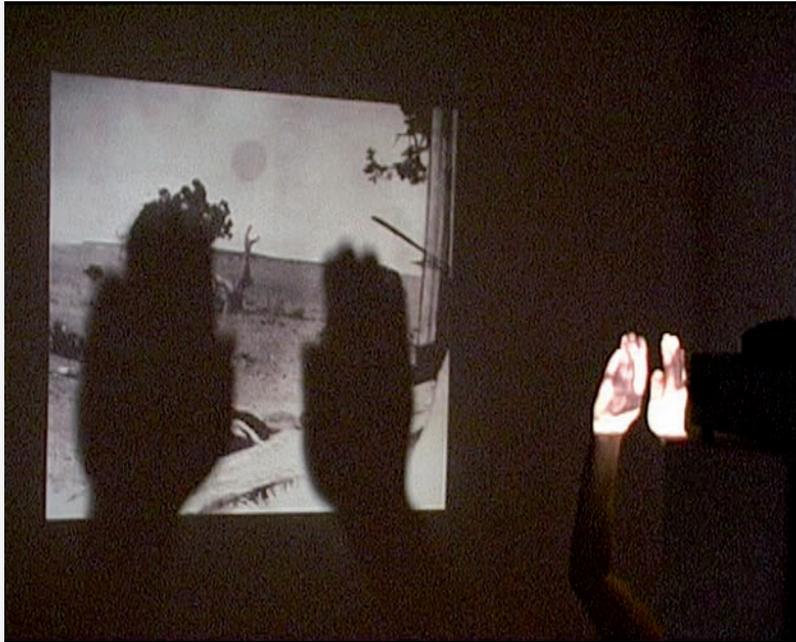
Text Video, 18 minutes

Warburg had never intended to publish the images made available in the book. Regarding the ones that were part of his famous lecture, “the serpent dance”, Warburg had even insisted the images should never be published.

Dear Aby,

Some time ago we came across the book about the photo-graphs you took on your trip to a couple of ancient villages of Pueblo Indian tribes. We had known some of them already through another book that was published a bit earlier about your lecture “the serpent dance”, but we had never seen all of them. Needless to say we were surprised.

After you had taken the images and stored them in boxes for about twenty five years, you yourself had used some of them in the lecture that was supposed to prove your mental sanity in the sanatorium in Kreuzlingen. We knew that you had written and communicated clearly afterwards that none of the parts of this lecture should ever be published. But as it goes, after you died they were taken out of the boxes, and now, decades later, they are here – printed in a glossy hardcover book and maybe even on display in exhibitions somewhere.



If we are to show you these images and accompany them with our words and thoughts, we do so to share with you our concerns about the taking of pictures and their own growing life. We know that we will not be able to make them disappear, but we hope we can help them become something else. What were they supposed to represent? What are they representing today? It is their use which we would like to talk about with you.

What to do with images that, although they were made, should never have been published or shown? How should one deal with them? How could your doubts be articulated as well as our doubts about them being shown?

You must have experienced great strangeness, displacement and irritation. Regarding your lecture, it seems as if here, in these villages, you clearly understood and realized that the real limit of the rationalist, modern Western mentality is its tendency to negate things that cannot be measured. Ephemeral phenomena that cannot be described other than in their form, in their outer appearance, as you said.



Could it be that your taking of pictures of the Pueblo Indians, their dances and houses, helped you stay connected with this measurable and comprehensible world of yours? Do you agree with us that these pictures are snapshots taken as souvenirs, as self-defining and grounding mirrors? Did you collect other things? Sand, stones, pottery?

We are asking ourselves what the reportable external events that you've experienced could have been and how, in your opinion they relate themselves to the materiality of the souvenir. In terms of a mediation of one's own experience to a public, how important is the site where the experience was made? Did you need to take pictures to localize and categorize your experience?

The souvenir domesticates the event. External experience is internalized. The beast is taken home. And this beast is unlucky; in its capture we can witness the crossing from event to memory and desire. Origin becomes trace. The cultural sign triumphs over the natural. The photograph as souvenir is a logical extension of the pressed flower, the preservation of an instant in time through a reduction of physical dimensions and a

corresponding increase in significance supplied by means of narrative.

What narrative did your souvenirs generate for yourself? And what is the narration that is generated through them today? What were the translations you have been working on, and what were the ones you'd been looking for? The ones you never found?

It is said that your wish for the romantic contributed to your westward fever. You were not exactly a traveler, neither a vagabond looking for the new if necessary with the option never to return to your place of origin, nor an explorer drawn westward to extend the last frontier. We are certain that you 'liked' it over there in the villages, that you appreciated the hospitality of the people and their willingness to let you witness their dances, visit their homes. We think there is a very fine line between appreciation and appropriation, respect and self-aggrandizement, a line that is always shifting and impossible to detect in advance.

A friend of ours published a book with images that troubled him. He wrote a text accompanying the images in order to make them disappear, to somehow

return them to the ones who made them, used them, and were responsible for their existence – a gesture that articulated his refusal to keep these images as part of his own life. For our friend, the images were part of a symbolic practice of violence, appropriating spaces and people by placing them in front of the camera. But can photographs be returned? Or is another symbolic gesture needed in order to make them disappear?

The images that you have taken are used nowadays as ethnographical documents, tools used once more for retrospection. They become a way of decoding and naturalizing the present, and the present becomes the lens through which the past is constructed.

You never could speak about what you experienced under the vast western sky. Something must have struck you as being unspeakable. But how can one create ways to speak the unspeakable, address the impalpable? What is the material, the package of information, of which only a little drawing is left? How did the impact of that secret knowledge, whispered into your ear, unfold? Who was the sender of this drawn material? Who was the original recorder? And why are we receiving it?



Perhaps you would like to share some time with us, talk about the encounter and maybe even participate in a meeting with Jurino Cleo and his son, which we will organize. Then we could talk about symbolic practices in which the serpents, for example, are living agents that generate lightning at the same time that they represent lightning.



UNNAMED SERIES, PART 1+2. INSTALLATION VIEW BRUSSELS BIENNIAL 2008

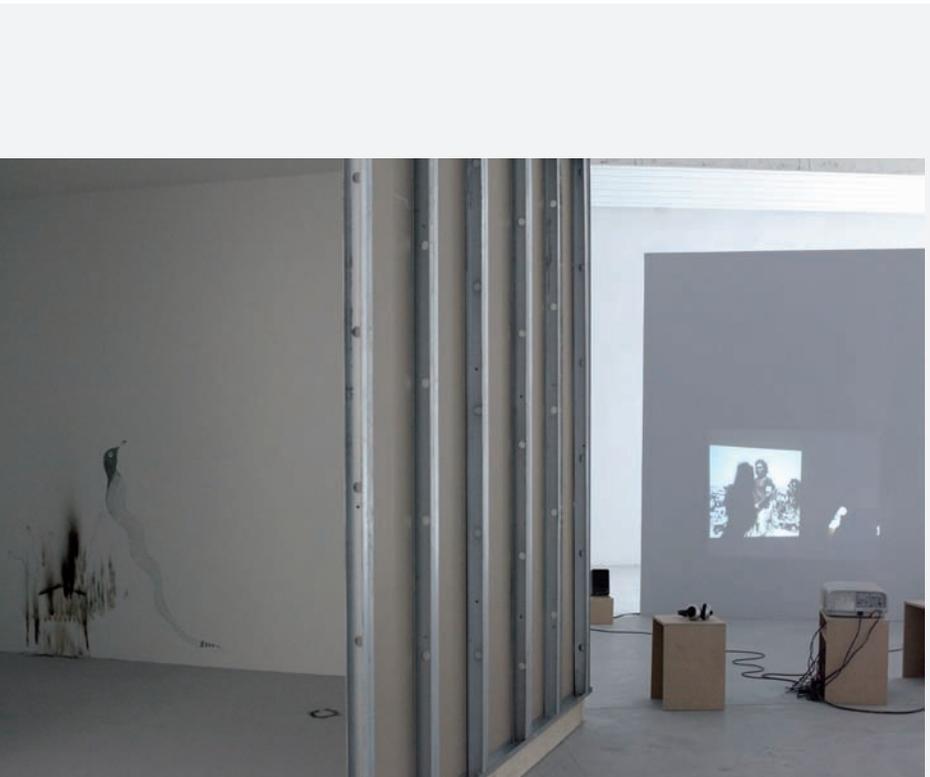
Stefan Pente, Ines Schaber

Unnamed Series

Part 7: Room 59 2010

Room (3 x 4 x 2,70 m), drawings

Unnamed Series is a series of works by Stefan Pente and Ines Schaber inspired by an encounter that Aby Warburg had with the Hopi Priest Cleo Jurino in Santa Fe in 1898. *Unnamed Series* works on a series on aspects that this famous encounter poses for us. *Part 1*: What is the importance of a representation of a site in which something important has happened? *Part 2*: How to deal with images that should not have been made, or should not have been published? *Part 4*: Which images would we like to multiply and distribute ourselves? *Part 5*: What is the logic of a viewed image? *Part 7*: How can we redefine or rearticulate the space of the secret that is contained in every image? *Part 8*: What would another symbolic practice of an image be? And *Part 9*: What is the answer to Part 1, asked again?



Cabinet 3: Artwork 213

A sorcerer and his son (they might be introduced later) present their visitor (who could also be introduced later) with a drawing about their greatest secret. To be more precise, they draw the drawing in front of the visitor's eyes. The act of drawing, the drawing itself, the speaking while drawing, the explanations for the secret and secrecy generated in the very moment are the gift for the visitor.

In the drawing, entitled "the serpent and the worldhouse," which we have in the form of a printed reproduction lying on the table in front of us, we recognize what could be the depiction of an architecture in cross-section so as to make various objects inside visible. Four arrow-headed serpentine lines rise from the building. Next to the building, three times taller, a slightly abstract representation of a snake, which, like the arrowed lines, coils upwards (towards the sky?). Its tongue is shaped like an arrow. Individual parts of the drawing are numbered. The numbers connect to a list of notations in a (phonetic) transcription in the language of the sorcerer and his son as well as in the language of the visitor. This index was obviously written by the visitor's hand, following the deliberations of the drawers.

Aitschin, house of Yaya—the fetish-Kashtiarts—the rainbow Yerrick—the fetisch (Yaya)—Nematje, the white cloud—Neaesh, the raincloud—Kaasch, rain—Purtunschtschj, lightning—Tzitz-chui, the water serpent—the four rings signify that whoever approaches the serpent and does not tell the truth drops dead before one can count to four.

Contemplating the drawing, the intentional meaning and effect of which remains incomprehensible for us despite a translation in the index, we're unable to deduce the secret the drawing is supposedly revealing or explaining. We recognize the signs for things, the signs for relations between things, for actions, for process and something like a notation of time, and we realize that we are confronted with a complex translation. Not only is a secret practice revealed to a non-member of the secret society of sorcerers practicing it (and therefore translated from the language of magic, incarnation and ritual activity into signs and explanatory narratives), but it is also revealed to a stranger, a visitor from a foreign place and culture with a different understanding and use of signs and explanatory narratives. Before us lies not only the drawing about a symbolic practice,

but also a testimony, trace and product of long-past and mutually shared activities of translation. If we want to participate in the secrets that were ciphered into the drawing, we have to activate the magic of the translation from practice to signs, from signs to reading signs, from reading signs to the creation of signs that translate one's own practice. How does the secret enter the image?

The sorcerer, his son and the visitor meet in a hotel. One of the foundations of their collaborative magic translating activities is the site of their encounter. They're meeting on the edges of their respective civilizations, between the 'villages', on a common ground created mutually to let the meeting come into being. Important is their alliance, which allows them, for the period of their encounter, to have a status that is different from the status at their origin. At this temporary site the participants are not who they were, but rather who they can only be here and now.

Even later, now that the site has vanished as the site of the encounter and has become the hotel room again, now that the sorcerer and his son have returned to their own village and the

visitor to his, the magic stays active by virtue of the alliance. The drawing, which the visitor will show to a public only thirty years later, the same drawing that lies as a reproduction on our table before us more than a hundred years after its creation, to this day carries, as soon as we actively join the alliance, the contagiousness of an infection (which, by the way, can generate different secrets than tradition).



a device for the recalling of important teachings



a tender interaction between the disclosed and the concealed



Cabinet 3: Artwork 218

drawing, testimony, trace and product

where the sign is a real and integral part
of the continuation of the physical universe

during the course of bending time





a drawing of translations of a drawing



I swear I saw this



UNNAMED SERIES, PART 2+7. INSTALLATION VIEW CENTRE D'ART PASSERELLE, FRANCE, 2010

Cabinet 4:
What is an Active Archive?

Cabinet 4

What is an Active Archive?

C4_Introduction What could an active archive, or another form of archival practice be?—Active archives, other archives—The “other” needs to be monitored and protected versus archives need an activity and possible appropriation—Neglecting abstract and objective notions of the material, resisting globalising and universalizing treatments of images, accounting for the labour of interlacing iconic, graphic and narrative constructions (Sekula)—Archives, *Mnemosyne* (Warburg)—Organisations from within—*Atlas, survival, pathos formula* (Warburg)—Forms of collecting and showing—Becoming insane—Repertoire of gestures—What name can I give to the thing that I miss? (Farocki)—Chaos.

C4_Image: Arab Ladies Union Meeting in 1944 in Jerusalem, photographed by the American Colony (Library of Congress in Washington DC).

C4_Essay: Umm el-Fahem To create an archive from scratch—Decisions about a structure—Identity versus place—Conditions and consequences—The archive as a place of creation and production—Creating voids for what is missing—Acting in the voids—Challenges—An image and its story.

C4_Interview: Khaba Interview with the art historian and co-founder of the image archive of Umm el-Fahem: Dr. Mustafa Khaba.

C4_Work: Schaber_Dear Jadwa Installation with the image of the Arab Ladies Union Meeting in 1944 in Jerusalem—Addressing the issue—The construction of memory through images and their transmission through time—Challenging the archive, acting in the void.

What is an Active Archive?

In the last decades other forms of archival practices were discussed within a large variety of fields. They resulted in dissimilarities in the terminologies and arguments surrounding the question of what “another” archive could be: one speaks of “counter archives,” “counter memories,” “special (other) archives,”¹ “nonprofit archives,”² “subcultural archives,” “minoritarian archives,” “archives of resistance,”³ “subcultural databanks,”⁴ “alternative memory stores,”⁵ “different than institutional archives,” “active archives,”⁶ “local archives,”⁷ “official archives and its opposites,”⁸ “vernacular and racial archives,”⁹ but also “agglomerations of minoritarian images,” “past turned space,” or “simply scrappy paperwork.”¹⁰

The above notions signify different definitions for these archives and also suggest different reasons for their existence. The one most frequently used defines the existence of the “other” archives in relation or opposition to “official” archives, suggesting that they can be subsumed under a relation to what is normally collected. This definition hints at a particular reason for the existence of the “other” archives, namely that they collect material that would otherwise not be there, be excluded from the realm of representation, not be considered worth putting into an archive, or not fit into the pattern of what can “normally” enter those spaces. These archives gather what is absent, missing or “unrepresented.” They encompass what does not fit, or what defies suitability, cannot find a place to dwell, what chooses not to be included or incorporated into a “regular” archive because the “other” archives know that their

¹ See wikipedia: <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archive>>. Accessed July, 2010.

² Ibid.

³ Tom Holert, “The Garbage of our Lives. Joschka Fischer, Madonna and the Politics of the Archive,” in *Interarchive* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Koenig, 2002), 500.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 331.

⁷ Antoinette Burton, *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 9.

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰ *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts and Signs* (London: Verso, 2007), 30.

content or material would be distorted or regularised. Not only are demands on the “regular” archives made via those descriptions; warnings of how to protect and monitor the “other” archives are put forward as well. Abigail Solomon-Godeau for example states that the renewal of documentary photography, among other things, must insist on maintaining the control over a work in terms of exhibition, publication, or distribution¹¹; and Tom Holert, discussing politically motivated archives, states that all these archives are marked by the fact that access to them must be closely guarded to ensure that they do not foster a false transparency, which emerges in the dialectics of visibility. As soon as the stored images and knowledge of a tradition of resistance, of (cultural-) political struggle (regardless of how guarded it is) are opened, the archival content of this tradition would be exempted from the control of the political project and becomes accessible and usable according to the logic of panopticism.¹² For Holert, there are legions of examples of such fatal openings and usurpations of archives. Both Solomon-Godeau and Holert, though, insist that “other” archives need a form of control over their material in order to foster and maintain a more radical position which could otherwise be misused, watered down, or normalised. However, Holert also acknowledges that “it is not always easy to recognize where the preservation of the content turns into sheer conservatism and where the appropriation and circulation of the cultural archive material draws out the political effectiveness of a certain, possibly subcultural tradition of resistance.”¹³ Consequently, the “other” in “another practice” is determined by the archive’s relation to its possible “outside.”

In “The Body and the Archive,” Sekula warns against a decontextualised handling of photography as well as the abstracting, anatomising, and uniforming operations that the image archive imposes on photography. He examines early uses of photography in police archives, which serve ends of surveillance through classification and the development of systems, which describe and dominate bodies.

¹¹ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Who Is Speaking Thus? Some Questions on Documentary Photography,” in Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 182.

¹² Tom Holert, “The Garbage of our Lives. Joschka Fischer, Madonna and the Politics of the Archive,” in *Interarchive* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2002), 500. Holert refers with his use of the term *panopticism* to Reg Whitaker, who describes our society as a “participatory panopticon” where control and consumerism go hand in hand. Today, the collection of data of individuals is commonly misused to identify consumers, and as such it produces identity politics from above to monitor specific groups.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 500.



Francis Galton, *Criminal Composite* (around 1878) and *Bertillonage* (1913).

Using the example of Alphonse Bertillon’s system of “Bertillonage” and Sir Francis Galton’s *Criminal Composites*, Sekula describes the intersection of photography, archive, and police work. “Bertillon’s nominalist system of identification and Galton’s essentialist system of typology constitute not only the two poles of positivist attempts to regulate social deviance by means of photography, but also the two poles of these attempts to regulate the semantic traffic in photographs. Bertillon sought to embed the photograph in the archive, Galton the archive in the photograph. While their projects were specialized and idiosyncratic, these pioneers of scientific policing and eugenics mapped out general parameters for the bureaucratic handling of visual documents.”¹⁴ Not only has the continued existence of these earlier inventions given rise to systems that, according to Sekula, live on today in police archives, in the “national security state, and in the condition of intensive and extensive surveillance that characterizes both everyday life and the geopolitical sphere,”¹⁵ even today the mechanisms of early archives continue to impose general

¹⁴ Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October*, 39 (1986): 55–6.

¹⁵ “Unfortunately, Bertillon and Galton are still with us. “Bertillon” survives in the operations of the national security state, in the condition of intensive and extensive surveillance that characterizes both

definitions on uses of photography: “What should be recognized . . . is that [even] photographic books (and exhibitions), frequently cannot help but reproduce these rudimentary ordering schemes [of the archive], and in so doing implicitly share in both [its] authority and [its] illusory neutrality.”¹⁶

However, not all definitions of an expanded or different archival practice point to the relation of an archive to its outside. Further namings of “other” archives suggest that they differ from institutional archives by virtue of their mode of organisation, that they can be understood in relation to their scope of action, or as having an activity—*active archives*. The juxtaposition of activity and archive is conflicting, though perhaps this very term, with its denotation of *doing*, best describes all the “other” archives. They often seem to resist the idea of “pure” storage, accumulation, and objectivity and instead search for a mode of production emerging from or through the archive itself.

In the introduction to his book *Delirious New York*, Rem Koolhaas joins two distinct terms: evidence and manifesto. He argues that the fatal weakness of manifestos lies in their “inherent lack of evidence” and that Manhattan’s problem is that “it is a mountain range of evidence without manifesto.” What would be needed, therefore, is a retroactive manifesto—one that would make use of the piles of unused evidence to develop a prospect.¹⁷ In a similar way, many archives link the practice of collecting evidence to the production of an activity from it. Although they rarely develop the form of a manifesto, a written declaration or an articulation of their doings, these archives’ primary cause is often to act and bring evidence into an actual or prospective being. If one looks at the scope of activity of these archives, one can observe that many of them operate locally, within a specific field, or in relation to a certain group. That does not mean that their images cannot be seen beyond this framing; it means that their starting point is often marked by an activity in a specific

everyday life and the geopolitical sphere. “Galton” lives in the renewed authority of biological determinism, founded in the increased hegemony of the political Right in the Western democracies. That is, Galton lives quite specifically in the neo-Spencerian pronouncements of Reaganism, Thatcherism, and the French National Front. Galton’s spirit also survives in the neoeugenicist implications of some of the new biotechnologies.” Sekula (1986): 62.

¹⁶ Allan Sekula, “Photography between Labour and Capital”, in *Mining Photographs and other Pictures 1948-1968* (Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and the University College of Cape Breton Press, 1983), 193–268.

¹⁷ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (Rotterdam: 010 publishers, 1994), 9–10.

context, an action geared to a political moment, or an addressing of a particular community, group, or question.

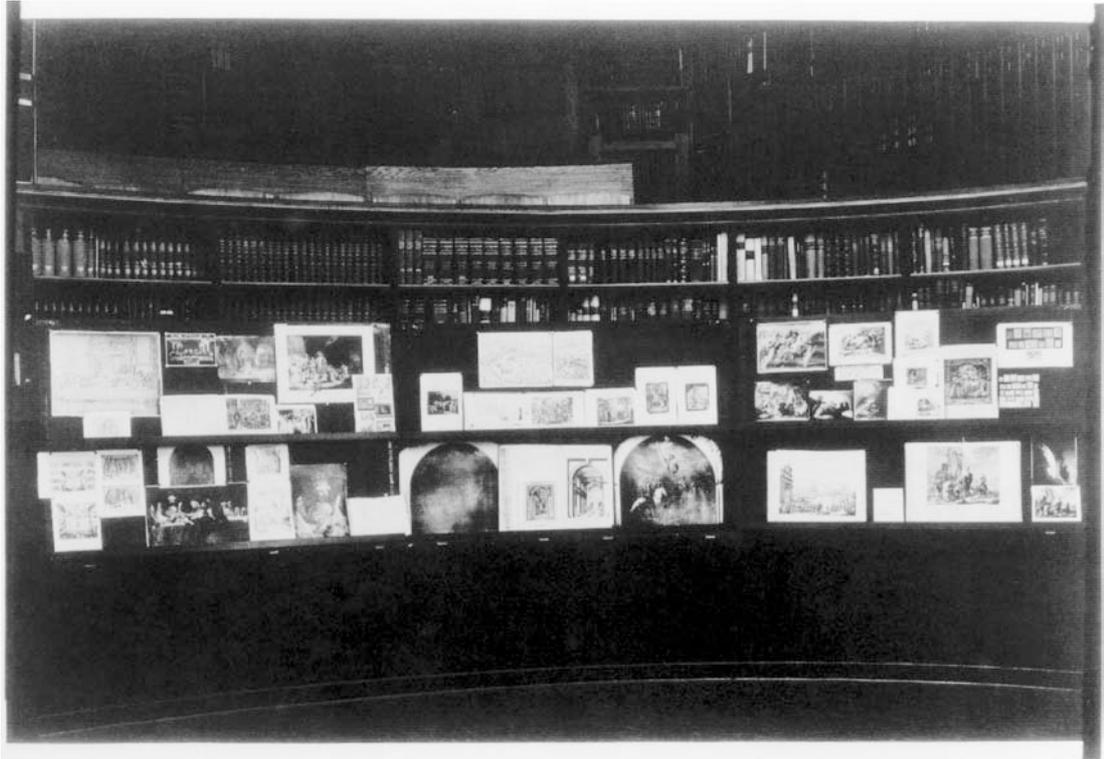
In “The Traffic in Photographs” Allan Sekula follows three assertions that have haunted the discourse and production of photography since its very beginning: one, that photography is a “language on its own”; two, that photography constitutes a “universal language”; and third, that photographs are used as a “universal equivalent.” Arguing that photography is none of these but that it has been constructed as such, Sekula insists that “photographic meaning is always a hybrid construction, the outcome of an interplay of iconic, graphic, and narrative conventions.”¹⁸ Could one pursue Sekula’s statement and conclude that “active” archives neglect the abstract and objective notions of the material they collect, that they resist a globalising and universalising treatment of images and instead account for the work involved in the interlacing of iconic, graphic, and narrative constructions?

MNEMOSYNE

Soon after Bertillon, Aby Warburg invented a fundamentally different way of handling images.¹⁹ His work stands as a reminder that the historical beginnings of the image archive (and the practices surrounding the photography it contains) are not only to be found in the regimented mechanisms of the police archive, but that they are also *Mnemosyne*—a work of remembrance which is inconceivable without images, and within which the past reveals itself “like lightning” or in the form of intertwined serpents. However, since Warburg challenged not only the classical art historical narrative and linear concepts of temporal progression, but also these cultural processes’ concomitant practices of organising images, titling them, and classifying them, his work is largely still considered a mystery; at least it seems

¹⁸ Allan Sekula, “The Traffic in Photographs,” in *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2004), 127.

¹⁹ Aby Warburg began collecting photographs massively in the 1880s. Around the turn of the century he began to sort them and array them. His work on the *Mnemosyne Atlas* was carried out from 1925 until his death in 1929.



View into the reading room with boards of the Rembrandt exhibition (“Claudius Civilis), 1926.

difficult to find a language and use for it.²⁰ A reason for this could be that Warburg’s body of work comprised, in many people’s opinion, mere articles delving into microscopic questions, specialised and scattered historical effects, rather than a systematic book. Warburg worked with interlaced memories and metamorphoses. He tried to shift the focal point of research away from the study of styles and aesthetic judgments—a method in art history common at the end of the nineteenth century—and toward the programmatic and iconographic aspects of an artwork. His library and the incredible number of manuscripts, index cards and documents it enclosed attempted to absorb all coincidences—“the unthinkable or unthought of objects of art history—and thereby transform itself, without ever manifesting itself as a canonical

²⁰ Georges Didi-Huberman’s currently published book on Warburg—Georges Didi-Huberman, *Das Nachleben der Bilder. Kunstgeschichte und Phantomzeit nach Aby Warburg* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010)—is, in my view, the first systematic reading of Warburg’s work. The following assessments and thoughts on Warburg are indebted first and foremost to the German edition of this book, which has not yet been translated into English.



View of the Ovid exhibition in the reading room, 1927.

result, a synthesis, or an absolute knowledge.”²¹

Warburg’s library of aesthetics and art history could be seen as the foundation for his work. In this exuberant room, which encompassed 65,000 volumes at the time of his death in 1929, Warburg put ideas for a reorientation of art history as academic discipline to the test. “Where boundaries between fields of study existed, the library attempted to establish connections. This room was both a library to do work in and a library that did work . . . a space for posing questions, a site for the documentation of problems, and a complex network.”²² Just as Warburg’s *Atlas* is often drawn upon for the testing or defining of other forms of image archives, his library is also an example of different ways knowledge can be arrayed and libraries can be organised. Clear distinctions between personal collections and scientific

²¹ Georges Didi-Hubermann, *Das Nachleben der Bilder. Kunstgeschichte und Phantomzeit nach Aby Warburg* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 178. (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

²² *Ibid.*, 46. (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

archives usually collapse in the case of Warburg. His arrays and ordering structures seek a logic “internal” to the themes and their relations instead of classifying the objects, books, and images within preexistent structures.

But what was the *Mnemosyne-Atlas*, developed by Warburg between 1925 and 1929 and not made public again until very recently? The book on the *Atlas*, which was only recently published, consists of seventy-nine panels on which Warburg organised images from a broad spectrum of sources, epochs, and materials. In addition to the titles that Warburg gave to the panels, the publishers decided to name and caption the artworks depicted thereon. One can see a collection of images grouped around specific themes—manuscripts, reproductions of works of art, and photographs extracted from newspapers or taken by Warburg himself. One could undoubtedly make an entire study of Warburg’s ways of grouping the panels. Serial effects are found next to contrasting effects. The images of an ensemble photographed on the same surface seem like a card game spread across a table. Other panels seem to display a chaotic accumulation of images, each of which are “accumulations” in their own right. The groupings are based either on forms (circle, sphere) or gestures (death, lament). Occasionally, one and the same image is cut into different details. One and the same scene is investigated systematically from afar and then from close up, with a zoom lens as it were. Some exposures are utilised in several panels, in divergent formats, or in different surroundings. The ensembles’ uniformity of colour has the ability, paradoxically, to emphasise potential heterogeneity: contrasts between the whole (the statue) and a detail (pedestal motif); *mise en abyme* of photographs (artwork) and photographs of photographs (art books depicted with their own montage effects); disregard for size within the arrangement; reversal of spatial orientation (an aerial image right next to a subterranean image); and finally anachronisms (Giorgione and Manet, an antique medallion and a postage stamp) or even deliberate combinations of differing levels of reality.

In order to gain closer access to the panels than the recently published edition allows, one must indeed take a closer look at two aspects of the *Atlas*: on the one hand, Warburg’s work on *pathos formulas* and *survival*,²³ which precede the *Atlas*,

²³ Many texts in English about Warburg translate his term *Nachleben* into “afterlife.” However, Didi-Huberman remarks that Warburg himself had translated the anglo-saxon term “survival,” which appears in the work of his friend Julius von Schlosser who himself refers to the work of the

and, on the other hand, his handling of the panels, which for him were not conclusive representational objects but rather testing grounds.

Warburg's model of *survival* refers to a search not only for things disappeared, but even more for fertile elements within them, a search for something which has the ability to leave traces behind and be memorised, something thus capable of a "recurrence." According to Warburg, the most repressed elements of a culture always survive through latent and continuously recurring gestures. These gestures or expressions in which the recurring element resides are no reflections of an intention (something that we introduce consciously), but rather the recurrence of the repressed. They live on in configurations that remain latent and have retained their capacity to affect, configurations which have been repressed while still exerting a force that seeks to create a channel for itself. According to Gombrich, Semon holds that "any event affecting living matter leaves traces. The potential energy conserved in these traces may, under suitable conditions, be reactivated and discharged—we then say the organism acts in a specific way because it remembers the previous event."²⁴ An image, a gesture, or a symbol can therefore be a crystallization of an energetic charge and an emotional experience that survives as an inheritance transmitted by social memory, becoming effective only through contact with the "selective will" of a particular period. This is why Warburg, according to Gombrich, often speaks of symbols as "dynamograms" that are transmitted to artists in a state of great tension, but that are not polarised in their active or passive, positive or negative energetic charge; their polarisation, which occurs through an encounter with a new epoch and its vital needs, can then bring about a complete transformation of meaning.²⁵ "Hence *survival* appears as the time of a counter-time [*Gegenzeit*] in history (in the sense of the becoming of styles), and the *pathos formula* appears as the gesture of a counter-influence in history (in the sense of the *storia* depicted by an image)."²⁶ The moment of remembrance that Warburg sought through the lens of the

ethnographer Edward B. Tylor, into *Nachleben*. In the following, then, I will use the term *survival* for *Nachleben*. See Didi-Hubermann (2010), 57–58.

²⁴ Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 242; quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: University Press, 1999), 93–94.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 310–11, (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

pathos formula thus proves, in keeping with its character, anachronistic: a presentness in which the *surviving* element stirs and acts.



Aby Warburg, *Tafel 78: Kirche und Staat. Geistliche Macht unter Verzicht auf weltliche*; reproduction from Aby Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas MNEMOSYNE*, 130.



Aby Warburg, *Tafel 78: Kirche und Staat. Geistliche Macht unter Verzicht auf weltliche*; reproduction from Aby Warburg, *Der Bilderatlas MNEMOSYNE*, 131.

Warburg's concept of time accordingly stands perpendicular to every chronological conception of time. He disorients histories, opens and complicates them by overlapping them and by joining disparate elements together. Warburg expanded the canonic historical model (narrative models and models possessing

continuous time and objective standards), “shifted his position little by little toward a theory of the memory of forms—a theory of ‘jumps’ and ‘latencies,’ of surviving and anachronistic forms consisting of both the volitional and the unconscious—and thus achieved a decisive break with the notion of historical progress or development.”²⁷

Long before his work on the *Atlas*, Warburg tried to schematise the *pathos formulas* and the history of images. He sketched them in the form of multiple dendrites, exactly like hypothetical genealogies and pairs of opposites that propagate themselves continuously. He constructed large tables composed of rows and columns where one can see lists with “mimetic degrees” such as “run,” “dance,” “chase,” “abduction,” “fight,” “victory,” “triumph,” “death,” “lament,” and “resurrection.” But most of the fields remained empty. The schemas represented a failed attempt that gave way only twenty years later to the *Mnemosyne-Atlas*, that formerly schematic, now perpetually reworked, never conclusively fixed montage of an already comprehensive, though ultimately endless, corpus of images. In light of his experience Warburg grasped a certain consequence, namely that “the history of images does not allow itself to be schematised, which is even more the case with the history of their *pathos formulas* because one cannot stick the images into a drawer without them losing their capacity for metamorphosis and ‘overdetermination.’”²⁸ Hence the *Atlas* was the form which Warburg found in his search for the *survival* of images. The attempt to schematise the images by means of concepts foundered; the research had to ensue from the images themselves and from the interrelationships they could create. The model of the glossary which surfaced within the schemas did not correspond to the nature of *survival*. With his “rhizomatic comparitism” Warburg sought, as Didi-Huberman writes, “less an identification of the motifs and their historical law of development than their ‘contamination’ and their temporal law of *survival*.”²⁹

Taking all this into account, the *Atlas* could sooner be called a photographic installation (since only photography could enable the widely differing objects, artworks, and situations to find their way in to the *Atlas*), a visual scaffolding of thought, working tool, form of display, rather than a finished cartography (as is

²⁷ Ibid., 78, (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

²⁸ Ibid., 510 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

²⁹ Ibid., 544 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

suggested by the *Atlas* publication). Warburg never understood the *Atlas* as finished; he experimented permanently with rearrangements and new relationships. If he made a habit of photographing these combinations before calling them into question or expanding them through new rearrangements, then only because “the concern of his work lay in the infinitely combinatory shifting of the images from panel to panel, rather than in an endpoint or final outcome.”³⁰ This is also a point that art historian Uwe Fleckner makes: the *Atlas* was never thought of as an atlas in itself. Instead, it was a supportive device for exhibitions and lectures that Warburg was conducting. The boards were an integral format for the accompaniment of texts and thoughts in Warburg’s (often long) lectures. Warburg not only used the larger panels that were leaning on the shelves of his library; he also occasionally provided smaller boards that people could hold in their hands and study individually.³¹ There may have been an expressive analogy between the images on the wall and the lecturer speaking, articulating his thoughts in front of them. One might imagine that those lectures consisted not only of Warburg himself and his boards, but also of a group of visitors moving with him through his library. The images were not conceived as illustrative material for the lectures; they consisted of a body of images that worked in synchrony with what Warburg was talking about. He conducted his studies *through* images and called his working process a “*Wissenschaft in Bildern*” (“science in pictures”).

The *Atlas* offers a form for comparing and establishing, through a single viewing of a single panel, connections between not one or two (two was customarily the maximum number of images shown simultaneously during slide lectures)³², but ten, twenty, or thirty images. Warburg could thereby exhibit the “whole archive,” or lay bare the entire card index. What was agglomerated in the library suddenly became an “unfolding visual milieu.”³³ Hence the *Atlas* seems less a preexistent interpretation of the transmission of images than a “visual matrix for multiplying

³⁰ Ibid., 507 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

³¹ Fleckner spoke about the subject of his upcoming book at a symposium in Berlin in November 2009: *Pathosformeln. Polare Motive der Verhandlungen*, Kolleg-Forschergruppe Bildakt und Verkörperung.

³² At the time Warburg developed the work in the *Atlas*, the most common format to present images within an art historical context was the double slide show Heinrich Wölfflin had created. Warburg on the other hand massively multiplied the number of images one could see at the same time during a lecture.

³³ Ibid., 505 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

possibilities of interpretation.”³⁴ Didi-Huberman describes this entity as a “new form of collection and display . . . representing neither a tidy form (a combination, made under the authority of a totalitarian principle of sense, of things which differ no more than nominally), nor an accumulation of bric-a-brac (a combination, made under the non-authority of whim, of things which differ to the highest possible degree). It was essential to show that rivers consist solely of tensions, that sheaves explode at the end, but also that differences create configurations and dissimilarities form imperceptibly coherent orders.”³⁵

Availing oneself of Warburg’s work for the discussion of a specific thematic complex is always risky in that it neglects the breadth and openness of his work’s approach. The visual character of the *Atlas* for example has often been emphasised, thereby overlooking that it didn’t merely contain around two thousand images—it was accompanied by two volumes of commentary in the form of text that directly corresponded to the *Atlas*’s visual arrays. It seems more important, albeit substantially more difficult, to read the *Atlas* as part of Warburg’s work in general. The first model for the *Atlas* lay undoubtedly in the probing of the structure in search of the objects that Warburg was examining and analytically “disassembling” and “reassembling.” And so the *Atlas* carries traces of a private language and an autobiographical search. Through the images fastened to sixty-three black screens, the reciprocal relationships in Warburg’s thought become discernible. Yet his inner strength subsisted, as Didi-Huberman describes, in his act of transforming “the results of this introspective work of remembrance into material for a new theory of the function of human visual memory.”³⁶ Still, Warburg unquestionably knew that insanity had been intrinsic to the inner moments of his project from the outset, the insanity of attempting to ponder all images with all their potential connections all at once. “As a real atlas of pictorial and symbolical overdetermination, *Mnemosyne* offers no methodological discourse, only the *mad demand* to think every image in relation to every other image, whereby further, as yet unrecognized, but also perhaps no less important images, relationships, and problems are expected to result.”³⁷

³⁴ Ibid., 512 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

³⁵ Ibid., 523 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

³⁶ Ibid., 509–510 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

³⁷ Ibid., 560 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

Warburg's endeavors to lend form to his work on his concepts of *Mnemosyne* and *survival* by means of the *Atlas* have become a topic of increasing interest only in recent years—as much in art history and visual studies as in art itself. The engagement with Warburg's work bears on aspects of the research of gestures and signs through photography (Ivekovic,³⁸ Olesen,³⁹ Goffmann⁴⁰), a scientific research through images (*Bildforschung* and cultural studies) or also the search for another form of archiving images (Kittler, Heidenreich, and Ernst⁴¹).

The uniqueness of Warburg's approach is the simultaneity of its concreteness and its generality. The *Atlas* was not intended as a bureaucratic solution to handling images; neither was it a method. It was, as Didi-Huberman writes, a project that lived up to the mad demand to link everything to everything. It was one of the few proposals that aspired to the exploration of all cultures without drawing universalising and generalising conclusions in the process. In contrast to other “active” image archives that evolve mostly from local questions, events, or specific groups, in which they also operate, Warburg's work is provocative and extraordinary for its omnidirectionality.⁴² To repeat the complexity of his work with and through images today, to activate or apply it, is a problem that will always run the risk of limiting precisely the openness and extensiveness of his approach. Since Warburg's work was never method, and never cared to be, since it was rather an enduring, often distraught struggle with *survival* whereby one can potentially run the danger of going crazy, it cannot be transferred with “ease.” Today many of Warburg's questions have resurfaced, be it in the work of artists or in the questions posed by science. For example, how can images become interconnected? What are the possibilities for

³⁸ See, for example, Sanja Ivekovic, Sabine Breitweiser (ed.), *Tragedy of a Venus, 1975* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2001).

³⁹ See, for example, Henrik Olesen, *Information is content. Content is Fiction. Content is Messy* (Installation, 2006).

⁴⁰ See, for example, Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (New York: Harpercollins, 1979).

⁴¹ See, for example, Wolfgang Ernst, Stefan Heidenreich and Ute Holl (eds.), *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2003).

⁴² This is a point that Agamben in particular picks up when he writes about the images associated with the nymph on plate 46 of the *Atlas*. These images are, for him, neither the original, nor are they simply a copy or repetition. “The nymph is a hybrid of archetype and phenomenon, first-timeness and repetition. But the nymph herself is neither archaic nor contemporary; she is undecidable in regards to diachrony and synchrony, unicity and multiplicity. . . . The nymph is the paradigm of the single images and the single images are the paradigms of the nymph.” “The paradigm,” writes Agamben, is “the place where analogy lives in perfect equilibrium beyond oppositions between generality and particularity.” The “pure phenomenon can never be isolated, since it shows itself in a continuous series of appearances.” Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method* (New York: Zone Books, 2009).

assembling them? What do they express, and to what do they lend expression? Which nonlinguistic, repressed, or subconscious expressions or gestures are capable of appearing in different times and in different places?

The German filmmaker Harun Farocki has dealt with these questions extensively. In films such as *Der Ausdruck der Hände*,⁴³ *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik*,⁴⁴ or *Gefängnisbilder*,⁴⁵ he collects and assembles expressive gestures that are cinematic, and that recur throughout the history of film. Through his spoken commentaries and cinematic editing, Farocki attempts to read these gestures and find out why and how a specific visual language recurs within the most disparate of epochs, political situations, or cultural contexts. According to Farocki, there exists in our culture no visual vocabulary comparable to a linguistic vocabulary. We lack the ability to genuinely associate in a visual sense, for in our text-based culture, despite all of its audiovisual media, there is no competence in thinking or communicating filmographically or “within the medium.” Thus Farocki repeatedly made the demand for a new way of sorting and indexing images that could, in the first place, enable the location of them in archives. This is how he came into contact with a scientific experiment in the mid-1990s established by Friedrich Kittler. The project *Suchbilder* attempted to develop a digital search engine that would enable images to search for images. “The desire for an image lexicon whose items could themselves be labelled by images,” according to the project’s drafter, “can only follow the notions that we have of a form, a shape, a visible constellation. So long as images are organised under terminological histories of motifs or under artists’ names, one thing will continue to remain uncertain: the visual characteristics that make them sortable. The images remain attributive of the search item and are incapable of ridding themselves of their function as mere illustrations thereof.”⁴⁶ The *Suchbilder* project consists in the development, with the help of information technology, of a “media-archaeologically updated version” for “asemantically operating image sorting programs.”⁴⁷ The computer is intended to be an active agent whose purpose is to test

⁴³ Harun Farocki, *Der Ausdruck der Hände*, Berlin / Köln, 1997, Video, 30 minutes.

⁴⁴ Harun Farocki, *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik*, Berlin / Köln, 1995, Video, 36 minutes.

⁴⁵ Harun Farocki, *Gefängnisbilder*, Berlin, 2000, Video, 60 minutes.

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Ernst, Stefan Heidenreich and Ute Holl (eds.), *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2003), 7 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 (translation by William Locke Wheeler from the German source).

whether or not the *Mnemosyne-Atlas* merely lacked the appropriate sorting-media and -algorithms, which today would be utilised to save visual memory in file masks.

A longing for the ability to engage, as part of filmmaking, in a different mode of research parallel to one's own search criteria (and perhaps research more "effectively") united Farocki with a project that could sort image archives anew and enable images to search for other images. Yet the reference to Warburg sought out by the search engine project seems quite a stretch, for the interesting thing about Warburg was, undoubtedly, the very attempt at putting the images as well as that which is not visible in them into an order.⁴⁸ Furthermore Warburg's arrays in the *Atlas* were not limited solely to "similar" images or gestures, but instead consisted of extremely divergent configurations. The *Atlas* was thus necessarily open due to the ambiguity of the visual. In addition Warburg was not aiming for a wordless historical narrative. Quite the contrary. Text and images were studied synchronously. What we should learn from Warburg, therefore, lies less in a purely visual order of images, but rather precisely in the problem of how we can display more than one order for a limited number of images. Thus Warburg's work more generatively poses the question of the relation between research, collection, and display than that of another kind of search engine.

I originally drew on Warburg's work with the *Atlas* in order to propose a counterbalance to Sekula's warnings against the archive in general, and especially to his warnings against the authority and illusory neutrality it exerts on the whole of photography. Still, even if in his text on the body and the archive Sekula warned against other ghosts in the archive, one cannot help recognising a certain similarity between contemporary police systems for identity recognition on the one hand and the aims of the *Suchbilder* project on the other. Can it therefore be inferred that this project is intended to make policing mechanisms of identity recognition useful for cultural studies? Or should we put this search for the relations of images and their surviving force on the table once again and wend our way towards the question: "what name can I give to the thing that I miss"?⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See Claus Pias, "Ordnen, was nicht zu sehen ist" in *Suchbilder*, 103.

⁴⁹ Farocki's question is also the title of his essay in *Suchbilder*. See Wolfgang Ernst, Stefan Heidenreich and Ute Holl (eds.), *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2003), 17.

To embark on a search in an archive is no exceptional project. But moving back and forth between an archive and a problematic while interrelating the both of them is a special undertaking. It would mean—as the work of Warburg and Farocki show—retrieving a particular problematic from an archive and bringing it back in equal measure into the archive. Normally one would describe the outcome of such a movement as collection by giving it the definition of a personal ordering system created by an individual person. But Warburg’s and Farocki’s works comb the area behind their “own” problematics for a comprehensive question. They interrogate the images themselves, and through them they interrogate images and image ordering systems in general. The specific and the general meet within their problematics and their image collections.⁵⁰ With his image montages Warburg for example pursues particular cultural “expressions” and tries to prove that they recur in the most divergent of situations. Thus in his work one can witness the becoming-general of a specific expression which is made visible not in the individual image, but in the montage of images extracted from extremely different times and cultural contexts.

This interface of the specific and the general is a place that Agamben attempted to describe, with recourse to Warburg’s nymph, through the concept of the *paradigm*: “The paradigm is the place where analogy lives in perfect equilibrium beyond oppositions between generality and particularity.” The images that Warburg and Farocki investigate are images capable of expressing both the particular and the general. They draw something specific *from* all the images, something that can have an influence *on* the images. The relationships between the selected images change the images themselves; their arrangement, their montage, and their combination produce a new system, one capable of collecting *and* displaying.

Farocki’s question—*what name can I give to the thing that I miss?*—first and foremost stands for a project which is on the scout, a search striving to transpose the discourses of the image into the discourses of the archive. The type of archive produced both by Farocki and Warburg is a constructed accumulation of images through which something becomes visible. At the same time, the archives which both

⁵⁰ Another case in which something particular (a single image) is able to express something general can be seen in “iconic images.” Dorothea Lange’s picture of the *Migrant Mother* is one such image. It is, as many write, *the* image of the Great Depression. As such, a single image is capable of standing for an entire era. See Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

of them create or attempt to create differ radically from common methods of image archiving. In the same way their work is often designated as a study of images, one could describe the archives they both produce as *active* archives. In active archives, distinctions between the object of study and the archive itself are dissolved, a fluent movement between the specific and the general prevails, the problematics surrounding photography are not separated from those of the archive, and ultimately a form is sought that can also render that which is collected demonstrable.

These approaches in particular often become the focus of critique because they draw a line fundamentally between themselves and the common rules of image archiving. The specificity on which these approaches establishes their collections contests the condition of “normal” image archives which dictate that all images be handled “neutrally” and uniformly in order to render them locatable later on. For how, one could ask, can an archive like Warburg’s help someone find something? How could a researcher find his bearings within this arrangement; how could the archive become useful to others; how should others read things therein? The organisation of the “normal” image archive is founded on the objectification and neutrality of its images. It adapts every image to a system and proceeds with them according to the same pattern. Yet images, as we are continually reminded by John Berger, alter their readability; they are dependent not only on the subjectivity of the viewer, but also on their surrounding context. A form for the interpretation and activation of images themselves takes place in their montage. As a consequence, “active” archives find themselves confronted time and again with accusations of non-scientificness, with subjectivity in their dealings with historical documents, and with particularism. They are often charged with a reckless treatment of images, or even the production of untruths. Concepts long since considered dubious within discourses of contemporary photography are applied unreservedly in the archive. But what would it mean to take the discourses of photography seriously inside the archive as well? And in doing so, how would the archive have to modify itself?

Warburg’s and Farocki’s approaches amount to a special mode of connecting the discourse of the image with that of the archive. There exist legions of archives that test other models for handling images and take on the questions posed by the material they house. I would call each attempt at engaging with a generalising use of images, at tackling the challenge to handle images differently “active.” For all that,

Sekula's warnings against the archive in general reverberate in all endeavors to deal with images and collections differently. In order to contest them, one would have to start from the images themselves and take on the questions to which they give rise. This converse approach also means that one must—when one does not understand the archive as a storehouse—embrace the chaos and difficulties that any accumulation of images necessarily produces.

The Archive as a Place of Production

The Photographic Archive of the Gallery in Umm el-Fahem, Israel

When archives grow, most of the time new material is added to existing structures and collected according to the mission of the existing archive. When archives are founded anew they need to create and decide upon a structure, develop a method for sorting and classifying items, and determine the parameters of what it will collect. In recent years, new foundations for image archives in the Arab region have been created, and various approaches to these archives have been taken. For example, the Arab Image Foundation states that the selection of photographs for their collection is based on aesthetic, artistic, cultural, and historical criteria, regardless of genre. Of interest are all images produced by Arab photographers or residents of the Arab world. Works of some photographers previously scattered throughout various cities are collected to allow a clearer understanding of their work.¹ Contrary to this identity-based collection of photographers, the founders of the image archive of the gallery in the Umm el-Fahem, Israel, have a different goal. They begin with the basic fact that there is no image archive that collects and makes available the local and more ephemeral aspects of Palestinian lives. They argue that most historians who deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict focus on descriptions and analysis of the general frame while largely neglecting historical aspects, such as local, cultural, social, and historical facets. In their view this has produced a writing of history, which has thus far neglected local aspects and different voices.² An archive is therefore needed in order to give those voices a space and to create a local model that could be adopted by others.

The Arab Image Foundation and the archive of the gallery in Umm el-Fahem are new foundations of collections of photographs of Arab/Palestinian

¹ See <www.fai.org.lb/Home.aspx> (mission statement). Accessed, July 2011.

² Dr. Mustafa Khaba, "The Photographic History of Umm el-Fahem and Wadi 'Ara," in *Memories of a Place: The Photographic History of Wadi 'Ara, 1903-2008* (Umm el-Fahem: Elsbar Association, 2008), 279–275.

heritage,³ which function according to quite different concepts and terms. Both have set up archives or collections of images according to a preset concept, and both use this concept to collect, acquire, and exhibit photographs. They must decide how to collect images, where to find them, what to include, and what to exclude as well as decide how to name, caption, and organise the collections. We need to ask what kind of construction, actively or effectively, those projects are using and how these choices influence the reading (or making) of history.

In 2008 the gallery in Umm el-Fahem presented the first exhibition of the research they had commissioned from the art historian Dr. Mustafa Kabha and the photographer Guy Raz to build up the photographic archive: *Memories of a Place: The Photographic History of Wadi 'Ara, 1903–2008*. In Israel, few photographic collections have so far been dedicated to the Arab culture in the region. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue, and it also marked the launch of the archival webpage of the gallery presenting a selection of images they had collected and commissioned. Besides the fundamental decision to focus on the history of the place in and around Umm el-Fahem, Kabha and Raz organised the show around two complementary levels: the temporal level (from the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century) and the contextual level (addressing social, cultural, and existential issues).⁴

The book and the exhibition opened with two aerial views of the Wadi 'Ara, one dating from 1944, the other from 2007. It is followed by five untitled images from the region. The subsequent sections are titled with the following headlines: *Photographs from the Gottlieb Schumacher Archeological Expedition, 1903–1905 // The Wadi 'Ara, al-Lajjun (Megiddo) in World War I // The American (University of Chicago) archeological expedition at Tel Megiddo, 1925–1939 // The spirit of the era: first half of the 20th century // Photographs of the villages of Wadi 'Ara and Bilad al-Ruha region (Ramot Menasheh), 1920–1948 // Life under the shadow of the military government and its implications, 1949–1970 // Photographs of the villages of Wadi 'Ara and Bilad al-Ruha region (Ramot Menasheh), 1970s //*

³ The Arab Image Foundation was founded in 1997 in Beirut, Lebanon, the archive of the Gallery in Umm el-Fahem, Israel, in 2008.

⁴ See Dr. Mustafa Khaba, *The Photographic History of Umm el-Fahem and Wadi 'Ara*, on the webpage of the exhibition <<http://www.umelfahemgallery.org/galleryen/default.asp?CatID=32&ID=49>>. Accessed July 2011.

Kahane's visit to Umm el-Fahem and its implications // Sport activities in Wadi 'Ara 1946–2008 // Panoramas // Women and workers // The Green Line // The October 2000 events // Mosques // Tombs of the sheiks // The Depopulated Villages // Morning traffic jams // Stands on the roads // Houses and workshops // The elderly // The construction site of Umm el-Fahem Museum of Contemporary Art // Charcoal preparation.

At first sight the exhibition reminded me of a classical photographic exhibition in a local gallery. Series were titled and images described, black and wooden frames were used for display, and each single image received a short caption. Only at second glance did the setting of the exhibition become more provocative. There was a clear shift between the temporal level and the contextual level. It was not about the different ways to title the sections, but about the substantially different gazes of the photographers towards the subjects or sites they photographed. The sections described by Khaba as the “temporal level” seemed to be named according to the archives from which they were taken. The section on *Photographs from the Gottlieb Schumacher Archeological expedition, 1903–1905*, for example, was titled with

*Gottlieb Schuhmacher, TELL EL-MUTESELLIM,
Baurat Dr. Gottlieb Schuhmacher in Haifa,
Prof. Lic. Dr. C. Steuernagel in Halle,
(1903–1905), in Kommission bei Rudolf Haupt,
Leipzig 1908*

No information about Schuhmacher, his mission in Haifa, or his reasons for photographing in the area of the Wadi 'Ara were mentioned. Similarly, no detailed information was added on the section titled *The Wadi 'Ara, al-Lajjun (Megiddo) in World War I*. The images were given captions like *Transport of British supplies through the Ottoman lines, Imperial War Museum* or *Ottoman prisoners being transferred at the Muslim crossing towards al-Lajjun (Megiddo), Imperial War Museum*.

Is the inconsistency in the captions—sometimes referring to the photographer, sometimes to a period of time, and at other times to the sources from which they derived—the result of limited resources and time on the part of the researchers? Did they not invest enough work to research and communicate the

sources, the identity of the photographers, or the historical and political conditions under which those images were produced? Is the “original” context of the images not mentioned on purpose? Are the images cut from their original historical context and their conditions of production to produce something entirely different in the context of the exhibition in Umm el-Fahem? I asked these questions to Kabha, and he responded as follows: “When images are transferred from one archive to another, the image itself is not subject to change, but the purpose of its use and employment is, as is the process in which it is prepared to become an instrument used in shaping the collective memory of the Palestinian people, which was transformed from a collective memory of people fulfilling their national ambitions on their homeland into a diaspora memory.”⁵

INSTRUMENTS FOR SHAPING A HISTORY

The purpose and use of an image within a process that becomes an instrument in the shaping of a specific history can be crucially different in various archives. Images can tell different stories and the context in which they appear supports or even produces this shift in the perception of the image. The same images that the archive in Israel uses as part of the temporal level can, for example, also be found in the archives of the Imperial War Museum in London. They can easily be identified as 5 out of 92 photographs by a British soldier named Major R. Denning.⁶ Denning’s photographs at the Imperial War Museum show the long journey he made with his cavalry troop from Egypt to Lebanon, where the series of photographs ends. He passed with his troops through Judea, Ludd, Jerusalem, along the Jordan river, passing Mount Temptation, the Dead Sea, the Mountains of Moab, Ismailia, Jericho, the Mount of Olives, Jaffa, Bethlehem, Hebron, Enab, the Mount of Temptation, Vresca, the Wadi Henaan, Megiddo, the Yarkukh Valley, the Sea of Galilee, Lake Huleh, El Kuneitra, Hedjaz, El Hame, Wadi Chafur, Mount Carmel, Damascus, Zebdani, Baalbeek Valley, Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Acre, Tyre, Palmyra, and Homs. The narrative of his journey is equivalent to the movement of the British troops in

⁵ See Cabinet 4: Interview with Dr. Mustafa Khaba: *Images of a Place*, conducted by the author via email in 2008.

⁶ Denning donated his photographs to the Imperial War Museum in 1972.

the First World War in Palestine. Sitting in the archive of the Imperial War Museum, it is the route that I am following through the series of images. Next to Denning's photographs, in the same folder, are other images by other soldiers: images from the field, most of the time picturing a biblical landscape (imagined or re-imagined) and the everyday life of the troops. Rarely is war itself pictured, and we very rarely see an image of the life of the local people. In the context of the archive of the Imperial War Museum, the identity of the soldier is important, as is the documentation of the life of the troops in wartime. People who visit the Imperial War Museum are often family members of the troops or have been soldiers themselves. Sometimes scientists come. It is quite another story in the archive in Umm el-Fahem. There the audience has an entirely different interest in the images. For them the archive is one of the first attempts to picture the history of the place in which they are living. The identity of the soldier is of lesser interest, but the images he made can provide a view of the locales, an image of their history.

To meet the audiences' expectations, hopes, interests, and desires, the archive in Umm el-Fahem introduces something that I would call a subtle rewriting of context. Here are two exemplary captions.



Battles of Megiddo. First view over Megiddo to the Esdraelon Valley on the morning of 20th September. A sensational view, as the sight meant that the Musmus Pass was in our rear, and we were clear of the last obstacles to the capture of the Turkish army. (5th Cavalry Division). (Caption: Imperial War Museum, London).



The eastern exit of Wadi ‘Ara towards the al-Lajjun (Megiddo) intersection; Imperial War Museum. (Caption: Catalogue and Exhibition Gallery of Umm el-Fahem).

The second caption is not a lie but an abstraction of the voice of the soldier. It locates the image at a place, and does not mention the personal view of the British soldier and his remarks. The identity and the view of the photographer, although kept through the image, are excluded in the caption. His gaze can be seen, but he is not allowed to speak. The image has another purpose—it is an *instrument to shape the collective memory of Palestinians*. In its new context the image is placed within another frame: caption, section, series, exhibition, and audience have changed. The role that this image plays is not to discuss the position of a photographer of the British troops but to investigate how his gaze and the images that he has made are able say something to and for a local audience in a contemporary Arab city in Israel.⁷ Asking Khaba about it, he states, “These details are not mentioned in the exhibition, but while constructing the archive, we’ve been working on retrieving whatever can be retrieved from the context in which the image was taken in the first place—who is the photographer and so on, but we surely believe that retrieving the complete

⁷ Different than Malek Alloula’s work on the colonial photographs taken by French soldiers in Algeria, which he accompanies with a text in order to return them to their sender, Khaba and the gallery in Umm el-Fahem create another way of dealing with a harmful past. In abstracting the voice of the sender, they somehow appropriate his images and make him disappear.

context is almost impossible.”⁸ I do not think this is quite the case. Information about the images, in the Imperial War Museum at least, is very easy to access, but it might distort the purpose of the newly founded archive. In my view, the images are used to enable a narrative in which some captions, voices, or images would be disruptive. The images and the accompanying texts are selected to fulfil a specific purpose within the exhibition and the newly founded archive.

PRODUCTION

The archive in Umm el-Fahem does not limit itself to historical photographs by former colonial powers. In addition to the temporal level of the collection, which brings together photographs from diverse archives and contexts, the main focus of the exhibition and the archive in Umm el-Fahem, lies, in my view, not on this temporal, but on the conceptual level. It is here where the implementation of the local takes place. In the exhibition, but also in the catalogue, gazes of the photographers start to move. People appear. Work is done. Children play. The wall is built. Demonstrations take place. Groups pose in the studios. The city is photographed and the elderly are shown in their homes. This conceptual level, as Khaba names it, is what the archive seems to be about: to create an awareness of the local, to read it through images, and to enable the process of collective discussion of a local history through images on the walls that people are able to look at and discuss. The gallery space thus becomes a place in which a collective memory is (discussed and) *created*.

⁸ See Cabinet 4: Interview: Dr. Mustafa Khaba: *Images of a Place*, conducted by the author via email in 2008.



Gallery of Umm el-Fahem, opening of the exhibition *Memory of a Place*, 2009.

The archive collects images from locals and commissions the production of new images by photographers. There is, for example, the series on the elders of Umm el-Fahem, a series that the archive and gallery has commissioned by the photographer Shai Aloni.



Shai Aloni, Upper left: *Al Haj Mohammed Aike Aghbaria and his wife Zohria Mustafa*, Umm el-Fahem; Upper right: *Ahmad Muhammad Khalil Ighbariyya (b. 1925) & his wife Amnih Salih (b. 1928)*, Umm el-Fahem (2007–2008); Lower left: Shai Aloni, *Najib Sadek Jabarin (b. 1926)*, Umm el-Fahem (2007–2008); Lower right: Shai Aloni, *Khaled Salih Subayhat, Salem*, Umm el-Fahem (2007–2008).

It might be the first time that the inhabitants of Umm el-Fahem have been photographed and interviewed in such a comprehensive manner. The archive project of the gallery is not only a project that formulates a concept for the collection and research of existing photographs from the area; it is also a project that partially produces what it collects. In this sense, one could describe the conceptual level of the archive as one of primary production.

At the gallery in Umm el-Fahem, production is thus part of the making of an archive. This is evident in the commissions for the conceptual level and also in the way the exhibitions are installed. There, the various gazes—for example the one of a soldier of the Imperial troops and the one of a local photographer—seem to stare at each other. Between the spatially arranged images of the exhibition is a void, a void that is not filled but articulates the missing photographs within the history of the place. It has often been noted that one of the problems in retrieving the history of Palestinian life through photography is that few photographers worked on this aspect in the past. One way of dealing with this problem is to retrieve the few collections of photographers that actually do exist. This is, as mentioned above, the way in which the Arab Image Foundation conceives part of their function in creating an archive. Besides the photographers that the AIF collects, there are also other photographers whose work is still not part of an archive or a broader collection. For example, is it known that in the 1910s and 1920s, Palestinian photographers existed? Khaba names one as an example: “Palestinian photographers did exist and were active in the big cities in particular. One of them for example is Eesa El Sawabeni from Jaffa city, whose signature appears on many remaining images of that period.” Another way is to construct the life of Palestinians through other photographers and photographs, as Ariella Azouley shows in her upcoming book. Yet another approach is the one the archive in Umm el-Fahem has proposed: to find a way through which the absence of the photographic history can be represented. The void that stands for the missing photographs is articulated through the simultaneous presence of the temporal level and the conceptual level. In between the two levels, the void is a space through which visitors to the exhibition have to pass, and hence the exhibition enables a physical experience of something that is missing.

In this sense, I would argue that the archive of Umm el-Fahem is consciously constructing a narrative through using, reusing, and recontextualising

images, as well as commissioning photographs and finding local holders. They use principles of montage, confronting and contrasting elements of gazes of identity, and install the images in such a way that they look at each other. They do so not in a “scientific” way but in a way that creates a space where it becomes visible or evident that something is missing. Here, the archive is not a place of pure storage, but an active player in the construction of a history.

CREATING AN ARCHIVE

Any decision for one structure for an archive is at the same time a decision against some other structure. The archive in Umm el-Fahem has made a decisive choice to favor locality and place vis à vis other possible aspects. But what about other images that might still exist even though, as Kabha and Raz report, many Palestinian archives were destroyed after 1948? Would other images, images that were made outside of Umm el-Fahem, be excluded from the archive? Under what conditions or changes to their concept would the archive include images that did not focus on the quotidian aspects of Palestinian lives in and around Umm el-Fahem specifically? What would an archive produce that would focus on the identity of the photographer instead of the images of a place?

This concept is used by the Arab Image Foundation and has also been the focus in a series of books: The most important books written by Palestinians were published in Europe and the United States and were not distributed in Palestine. Professor Walid Khalidi, who was born in Jerusalem and works in Beirut, put forth the photographed history of the Palestinians of 1876–1948 for the first time in his early book *Before their Diaspora* (1984), which deals with the depopulated villages of 1948, and in *All that Remains* (1992). Khalidi based his book on earlier photographs from Bonfils, the French photography studio whose centre was in Beirut, and mainly on the photographs of the photographer Khalil Raad, who worked in Jerusalem in 1898-1946. He also collected photographs from the archives of the Palestinian centres in Ramallah and Beirut. Elias Sanbar published *Les Palestiniens* in 2004 in France. The book comprises photographs from the early days of photography up to the beginning of the 21st century (1839–2002). His book is the

most comprehensive study of Palestinian photography. It is based on photographs collected in archives in France and the foreign press agencies. Issam Nassar published his book *Different Snapshots: The History of Early Local Photography in Palestine, 1850–1948* in Arabic in 2005. The pictures that appear in the book are mainly family and studio photographs. According to Guy Raz, the most important book in Hebrew, written and edited by Dr. Rona Sela, which deals with early Palestinian photography is: *Photography in Palestine/Eretz Israel in the 1930s and 1940s*, published in 2000.

The question that these publications raised for me were “What are the various approaches to creating an image history of the Palestinian people?” and “What do they enable?”⁹ What are the strengths of the concept of the archive in Umm el-Fahem and what are its limits? Would the holders of the archive be able to change the concept if visitors, contributors, and participants of that history started to become active in the midst of the void?



Left: *Israel's annexation of the Triangle, May 1949* section; [106] *A military government officer meeting with the Umm el-Fahem mukhtars*, (Benno Rotheberg, photographer, Israel State Archives). Right: *Women and Workers* section; [290] *Women in Umm el-Fahem* (1984), (Michael Heiman, photographer).

⁹ See Cabinet 1+2: Introduction.



Life under the shadow of the military government and its implications, 1949–1970. section; [177] Youth from Kufr Qari' 1970s, Courtesy of the al-Bir association.

In my interview with Khaba and in conversations with people from the gallery, I did not receive answers to these questions. And maybe I was not in any position to ask them. Nevertheless, as part of an exhibition that took place in the gallery in 2008, I considered myself a researcher for the archive (because I had access to a number of archives in Western Europe and the United States) as well as an artist that could ask those questions in a different form. I studied the few books on Palestinian photographers that existed, and I went through thousands of images that I could find in other archives that were made in the region.¹⁰ Most of those images were made during wartime, as part of colonial undertakings or biblical travels, and I was slowly put in the position of the gazes and views that the images took. But besides the need to find another gaze, one which I was comfortable bringing to the gallery, I was also looking for an image or images that would be able to answer my questions or help me ask them in a different way.

¹⁰ I need to thank Eyal Sivan for introducing me to the various archives and image holders.

After some time I came across two images that are part of the Matson Collection of the America Colony stored at the Library of Congress in Washington DC. The American Colony (1881–1934) was an independent, utopian, Christian sect formed by religious pilgrims who immigrated to Jerusalem from the United States and Sweden. The colony of about one hundred people at first lived communally. Among other endeavors, they set up schools and soup kitchens hoping to ensure their redemption through charitable work. After the turn of the century, the Colonists became involved in tourist trade; they produced souvenirs, opened a store, a hostel for travelers, and a photo service. After 1934, G. Eric Matson (who was part of the Colony) gained control of the Photo Department and its considerable photographic assets, which was renamed in 1940 as *The Matson Photo Service*. The primary employees of the photo service were John Whiting and two Palestinians, Hanna Safieh and Joseph H. Giries, who had begun to work there as apprentices. In 1946, in the face of increasing violence in Palestine, the Matsons left Jerusalem for Southern California. The staff shipped the bulk of the negatives to the United States, while the Jerusalem business continued to operate. The Jerusalem store and offices sustained heavy damage during the conflicts of 1948–1949, but the remaining negative stock was relocated to another area of Jerusalem. By the early 1950s, with tourism on the decline, the Photo Service's staff dispersed, forcing the closing of the Jerusalem operation. The Matsons continued to sell photographs from California, and ultimately the collection was donated to the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

The two images I came across were made by an unknown photographer in 1944 at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Most of the photographers from the American Colony had already left Jerusalem in 1944. According to the researchers of the Library of Congress in Washington DC, only Matson, John Whiting, Hanna Safieh, and Joseph H. Giries were still in Jerusalem at the time the two photographs were taken. According to the son of Hannah Safieh, his father did not take them.

The two images are titled:

Arab Ladies' Union group at K.D. Hotel [i.e., King David Hotel]. Sept. 15 '44.



The images show a group of women posing in front of the camera. Besides the rudimentary information given in the title, the archive in Washington does not provide any further explanations or contextual information about why the women on the photograph met, or who they were. Although it is not common for photographic archives to record the broader historical context of the subjects they photograph, in the case of the images above, this is a particularly regrettable practice. The images are two of the very rare photographic documents of early Palestinian women's history. Not only are there very few images of that history, very little information can be found about it in general. According to Ellen Fleischmann, there is a surprising silence that shrouds the subject of Palestinian women in almost all historical writings on Palestine. Reasons for this could be, on the one hand, the dispersal of the Palestinian people and the resulting scattering of the sources of their history and, on the other hand, the confiscation, control, and restriction of access by the Israelis to the archival materials, personal papers, and the like that remain in geographic Palestine. This has not, however, prevented historians from studying in depth the (male-led) Palestinian national movement, nor other topics in Palestinian history. The problem of studying Palestinian women must, therefore, extend beyond the difficulty of locating sources. According to Ellen L. Fleischmann, it is possible albeit difficult to find information about the Palestinian "elite" women's history, whereas the story and information about the rural women's history, their part and activity within the women's movement, is almost impossible to detect. The writing of the Palestinian women's movement has only been done and understood as part of the nationalist struggle, and therefore it has never been studied independently.

Two of the rare sources on the Palestinian women's movement are Matiel Mugannam's personal memories and Ellen L. Fleischmann's book *The Nation and its "New" Women*. And it was only in the latter that I was able to reconstruct the historical context of the images. According to Fleischmann,

In the summer of 1944, Huda Sha'rawi, Hawa Idris, and Amina al-Sa'id set off to visit women's organizations in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Trans-Jordan to explore the "idea of a confederation of Arab feminist unions", and discuss the plan for another mayor women's conference in Cairo. In early September, the Egyptian women arrived in Palestine where they were treated like royalty, hosted and fêted in every city they visited, drawing crowds and entertained by both male and female dignitaries. The *Arab Ladies Union* convened a mass

meeting with the Egyptian delegation in Jerusalem, issuing invitations to all of the women's organizations in the country.¹¹

Finally I had detected the occasion for the women's gathering. However, apart from the names of the more prominent leaders of the women's movement, it was impossible for me to identify the women in the photograph^A and their relation to the women's movement. (Please see endnote.)

Generally, it is acknowledged that the Palestinian women were the first among Arabs to organise politically. According to Miriam Cooke, the earliest institutions that they established were, generally speaking, charity oriented and helped foster a pro-feminist climate at the very beginning of the twentieth century. In 1903 Christian women in Acre set up an association to look after destitute children. Sixteen years later Muslim women in Jerusalem organised a parallel group called the Palestinian Arab Women's Congress.¹² According to Ellen L. Fleischmann, the Arab Women's Association of Palestine (AWA) was founded in Jerusalem at the first Palestine Arab Women's Congress on 26 October, 1929. The impetus for its establishment was the 1929 Western (Wailing) Wall riots and the national mobilisation that came in their wake. The goals of the AWA were to "work for the development of the social and economic affairs of the Arab women in Palestine, to endeavor to secure the extension of educational facilities for girls, [and] to use every possible and lawful means to elevate the standing of women."¹³ The AWA formed branches in most of the major cities and towns in Palestine and became the leading organisation of the Palestinian women's movement during the mandate period.¹⁴ In addition to their local activities, the Jerusalem women had extensive contact with other Arab women activists, such as Huda Sha'rawi in Egypt, and the different women's organizations in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Several Arab women's conferences were held in the 1930s—one in Beirut in April 1930 and another in Damascus and Baghdad in October 1932. But the major women's conference in the

¹¹ Ellen L. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 186.

¹² See Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 171, 181, 191.

¹³ Matiel Mogannam, *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Question* (London: Herbert Joseph, 1937), 77.

¹⁴ See Ellen L. Fleischmann, "The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement, 1929–1939," in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 29, (2000): 16–32; and Matiel Mogannam, *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Question* (London: Herbert Joseph, 1937).

1930s was the Eastern Women's Conference to defend Palestine, held in Cairo October 15-18, 1938, under the direction of Huda Sha'rawi. Women came from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt. Of the twelve Palestinian women who delivered speeches, five were from Jerusalem. Many more Palestinian women attended. Some of the resolutions of the conference included a statement that the Palestine problem was a European creation and thus Europe should take responsibility for solving it, demands for the abolition of the Palestine Mandate, the creation of a constitutional state, the nullification of the Balfour Declaration, the cessation of Jewish immigration, the prohibition of land sales to Jews and foreigners, a rejection of partition and British government policies, and demands for the release of prisoners and detainees. Furthermore, the conference decided to form Ladies Committees to defend Palestine in the various Arab countries, with the Egyptian committee to play the coordinating, central role linking all of the branches. Their work was to implement the conference's resolutions. It was after this conference, around 1939, that the AWA split into two groups, though not much is known about this division. The impetus for the split was, according to Fleischmann, very likely political factionalism, resulting in the *Arab Women's Union* becoming allied with the Husseini faction, while the *Arab Women's Association* allied with the Nashashibi faction. There was competition between Zlikha Shihabi and Zahiya Nashashibi over the presidency of the AWA, which also contributed to the split. According to the Palestinian Encyclopedia, most of the AWA branches transformed into women's unions, while the Jerusalem branch stayed under its first name and worked alongside the women's unions. Different accounts suggest that from the time of the split, the *Arab Women's Union*, subsequently headed by Zulikha Shihabi, tended to be a more political organisation, while the *Arab Women's Association* focused primarily on charity.¹⁵

The photograph and the women pictured in it were unknown to everybody I showed it to in Umm el-Fahem, Ramallah, and Tel Aviv. For a long time, it seems to have been stored at the Library of Congress, and maybe some private archives of the families of the women who had been participating in the making of the photograph,

¹⁵ See Ellen L. Fleischmann, "Jerusalem Women's Organizations During the British Mandate, 1920s–1930s," in *Jerusalem: the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)*, March, 1995.

without a larger public ever getting a sight of it. But I was not only interested in the history of the women and the photograph. I was also touched by the women's gazes. It was one of the few older images I had seen in all the archives where the gazes of people photographed were consciously and self-confidently returning the camera's look. For me, the women had a mission in making this photograph. In a letter that I wrote to one of them as part of my artwork, I asked to whom they had been addressing the image, to whom they were planning to send it, and who should host the image today.¹⁶ In my view, the group in the photograph had made the image to send it into the future, as a reminder, a gift, and maybe also as a riddle.

I had found an image that I wanted to exhibit and for which I wanted to find a dwelling place. As part of this process, I considered myself a mediator between an archive and another place. My search for this other place was posed like a question addressed to the various agents concerned with the writing of a Palestinian image history. While I had failed to receive an answer to my questions in interviews and discussions, it was the image that succeeded not only in posing the questions in a different way, but also in receiving some kind of answer. I had expected that through exhibiting the photograph and asking for a new host for it, other archives, political projects, family members, or initiatives would get in contact with me and offer to take it. But the gallery in Umm el-Fahem did not consider not keeping the photograph for their archive. When I told them that in my view the image would not fit into their collection conceptually, they simply answered that they would then have to change the concept of the archive.

My task as an artist who was invited to be part of an exhibition was neither to critique nor to restructure the archive in any way. My interest focused on the conceptual decisions to create an archive from scratch and the consequences and implications those decisions made for the writing of history. Like the void of the archive evoking the missing photographs, the image of the *Arab Ladies Union Meeting* operated as an active reminder of the limits and opportunities in conceptualising and producing a new archive.

¹⁶ See Cabinet 4: *Dear Jadwa*.

^A Through reading the history of the women's movement and the few available biographies, some names of women who might very likely be on the photograph can be reconstructed:

Huda Sha'rawi (born June 23, 1879; died December 12, 1947) was a pioneer Egyptian feminist, leader, and nationalist. Born in Minya, she was the daughter of Muhammad Sultan, the first president of the Egyptian Representative Council, and was taught to read the Qur'an and tutored in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Islamic subjects by Muslim women teachers in Cairo. She wrote poetry in both Arabic and French. She was married to her cousin, Ali Shaarawi, a leading political activist. Ali Pasha Shaarawi played an integral role in his wife's emergence as a public figure, actively supporting her feminist movement and often including her in his political conferences and meetings. It was no secret that Ali Pasha often sought his wife's council and, on numerous occasions, had her sit in his stead in high level political meetings. Even as a young woman, she showed her independence by entering a department store in Alexandria to buy her own clothes instead of having them brought to her home. She helped to organise *Mubarrat Muhammad Ali*, a women's social service organisation, in 1909 and the Union of Educated Egyptian Women in 1914, the year in which she traveled to Europe for the first time. She helped lead the first women's street demonstration during the Egyptian Revolution of 1919 and was elected president of the Wafdist Women's Central Committee. In 1923 Shaarawi founded and became the first president of the Egyptian Feminist Union after returning from the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage Congress in Rome. Upon her return, she removed her face veil in public for the first time, a signal event in the history of Egyptian feminism. She led Egyptian women pickets at the opening of Parliament in January 1924 and submitted a list of nationalist and feminist demands, which were ignored by the Wafdist government, whereupon she resigned from the Wafdist Women's Central Committee. She continued to lead the Egyptian Feminist Union until her death, publishing the feminist magazine *l'Egyptienne* (and *el-Masreyya*), and representing Egypt at women's congresses in Graz, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Marseilles, Istanbul, Brussels, Budapest, Copenhagen, Interlaken, and Geneva. She advocated peace and disarmament. Even if only some of her demands were met during her lifetime, she laid the groundwork for later gains by Egyptian women and remains the symbolic standard-bearer for their liberation movement.

Hawa Idris Huda's young cousin and confidant.

Amina al-Sa'id (born 1914, Cairo, Egypt—died August 13, 1995, Cairo), Egyptian journalist and writer who was one of Egypt's leading feminists and was a founder (1954) and editor (1954–69) of *Hawwa* (Eve), the first women's magazine to be published in Egypt. At age 14, al-Sa'id joined the youth section of the Egyptian Feminist Union, and in 1931 she became one of the first women to attend the Egyptian University. After graduating in 1935, she joined the staff of the journal *Al-Muṣawwar* and began writing columns, work that she continued until shortly before her death. In 1973 she became that publication's editor, and three years later she became chair of the publishing group that produced it, a position she held until 1985. Al-Sa'id also served in such capacities as secretary-general of the Pan-Arab League Women's Union (1958–69) and vice president of the Egyptian Union of Journalists (1959–70). She also was Egypt's representative at a number of international conferences. Among the awards she received were the First Order of the Republic (1975), the Universal Star (1979), and the National Arts Award (1982).

Zulaikha Shihabi According to the Mideast and North Africa Encyclopaedia, Zuleikha Shihabi (or al-Shihabi) was the founder of the Arab Women's Union. "In 1929 she was a member of the Arab Women's Executive Committee, which convened the Palestine Arab Women's Conference in Jerusalem, and directed the Palestinian women's movement during the Mandate period. Shihabi was elected president of the Arab Women's Union (AWU) in Jerusalem in 1937, a position she held until her death" in 1992. Shihabi came from a middle class family in Jerusalem. She was a member of the AWE and one of the founders of the AWU, which split from the AWA as a result of personal rivalry among the women and some fallout from the Husayni-Nashashibi competition. Shihabi was aligned with the Husaynis. She was an active member of the women's movement throughout her life. It is said that those who remember her consider Shihabi to be "the founder" of the Palestinian women's movement (which is, according to Fleischmann, not entirely accurate). She owned property in Jerusalem, which she donated for the use of the AWU. She never married.

Matiel Moghannam was a Lebanese Christian by birth, although she was brought up in the USA. She was a prominent leader of the Palestinian women's movement in the 1930s as well as the wife of Moghamman Moghannam, a lawyer originally from Jerusalem who was associated with the Nashashibi faction, which opposed the dominant Husayni faction in the Palestinian national movement during the Mandate period. Moghannam was the English-language secretary of the Arab Women's Executive Committee (founded 1929), which dominated the leadership of the women's movement in the early years. She wrote a book *The Arab Women and the Palestinian Problem* (1937) and contributed numerous articles to the Palestinian press. Her name is on many of the letters and memoranda of protest sent to the British government during the 1930s. Her husband's family was middle class, and not particularly prominent in Palestinian society. Her husband attended law school in the USA, where he met and married his wife, with whom he subsequently returned to Palestine.

Na'imiti 'alami al-Husayni Born 1895 to the al-'Alami family, her brother was the well-known nationalist Musa al-'Alami. She was the first female in her family sent to school, where she learned Italian, French, and English. She married Jamal al-Husayni in 1919, helping out with the family finances since she was wealthier than he was. Jamal was secretary of the Supreme Muslim Council, 1928–30; president of the Arab Executive in 1934; president of the Palestine Arab Party, elected March 1935; a member of the AHC, the Central Committee of the Jihad as well as the 1939 delegation to London. In 1937 he fled the country to avoid arrest and deportation. The family lived in Iraq from 1939 to 1941. Na'imiti and Jamal separated after World War II. It is not clear if she attended the 1938 conference; she did attend the 1944 conference. She does not appear to have been consistently active (possibly due to her family circumstances and living in exile). (See Ellen L. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 214.)

Tarab 'Auni 'Abd al-Hadi Not much has been written about her. She married the prominent nationalist 'Auni 'Abd al-Hadi. He was a member of numerous groups: al-Fatat, Central Relief Committee to Aid Syrian Victims in 1925; Central Relief Committee to Aid Victims of Palestine in 1929; founding member of both the Jerusalem Branch of the Islamic Conference, 1927–30, and the Istiqlal Party, 1932; Arab Higer Committee in 1936. He was deported to Sarafand in 1936. Tarab attended and spoke at the Eastern Women's Conference in 1938 and attended the 1944 Arab Women's Conference. (See: Fleischmann (2003): 214.)

Kathrin Shukri Dib Dib was Christian, active in Orthodox affairs in Jerusalem, and a president of the Orthodox Girls Educational Society. She attended and spoke at both the 1938 and the 1944 women's conferences in Cairo. Her husband, Shukri, was also active in Orthodox affairs, as president of the St. Ya'qub Orthodox Church; signer of the Call of Christians of Palestine to the Christian World to Save the Holy Places From Zionist Danger; member of the Orthodox Board of Jerusalem; and the Executive Committee sent to the Orthodox Conference of 1931. He was also on the National Committee of Jerusalem; and the Executive Committee sent to the Orthodox Conference of 1931. He was also on the National Committee of Jerusalem in 1936 (on the treasury committee). (See: Fleischmann (2003): 214.)

Anisa Subhi al-Khadra Born circa 1897, in Shwayfat, Lebanon, of the Salim family; died 1955 in Damascus. Khadra, whose father was Druze and mother was Muslim, was educated at an English school in Shwayfat. Her brother, Fu'ad, and future husband, Subhi, were active together in the Arab revolt of 1918 and as members of Faysal's government in Syria. She became engaged to Subhi in 1920. After the battle of Maysalun, she and her brother moved to Palestine. She and Subhi married in 1925. They lived in Jerusalem, where she became active in the women's movement, then moved to Acre, where she was a leader in the Acre AWU. She did not attend the 1938 and 1944 conferences. She and her family moved back to Jerusalem in 1940. They left for Damascus in 1947 when fighting broke out. Subhi, originally from Safad, was a founding member of the Arab Executive Committee and the 1931 Islamic Conference. He was deported to Sarafand in 1936 and imprisoned from 1937–1940. The Mufti appointed him legal advisor to the Supreme Muslim Council. He died in 1958.

Other founding members of the Arab Women's Union that might also be pictured on the photograph were, **Khadejeh Al-Hassani (Khaddija 'Arif al-Husayni)**, **Arnesteen Al-Ghoury**, **Sadeyeh Al-Jaberi**, **A'isha Al-Husini**, **Bahereh Al-Azameh**, **Shahina Adazdar**, **Wahedeh Al-Khaldi**, **Zaheyeh**

Nashasheeb, Namate Al-Husini, Fatoom Al-Budiri, and Clair Hanania. See <<http://awujer.org/en/aboutus.shtml>>. Accessed: February 22, 2011.

Images of a Place

An email conversation between Ines Schaber and Dr. Mustafa Kabha, co-curator of the exhibition *Memories of a Place* in the Gallery of Umm el-Fahem, Israel

Ines Schaber It might not be a coincidence that in preparing this interview I used an old template of another interview I did in 2004 with the art historian Diethard Kerbs from Berlin, and I hesitated to erase the old title: *About a Photograph and its Circulation*. At the time, I had worked on an image of the Berlin Revolution owned by Kerbs, who bought the entire archive of its photographer Willy Römer. Kerbs was engaged not only in the writing of the story of the photographer and in publicising his images, but also in mediating the broader historical context of the Berlin Revolution and its image legacy. I think one of his main concerns was to keep the collection as a whole. In our conversation, we discussed the circulation of this specific image, and we tried to track the changes that happened to our reading and understanding of it when looking at it in different archives.

In the recent show *Memories of a Place* that you conceptualised in the Gallery in Umm el-Fahem, many older images from the most diverse sources and archives are used. One could read the exhibition and the archive as a collection of images around a specific place—the Wadi ‘Ara—but for me it raised questions about the reuse and re-articulation of images. Your archive seems to be a place that appropriates images that do exist but are not yet in the right place. Could you write about your motivation for and praxis of using images from other sources and what happens to them when they are transferred from—let’s say—the Imperial War Museum to the Archive of the Gallery in Umm el-Fahem?

Mustafa Khaba I've been working for quite a long time on collecting and documenting the origins of Palestinian history, including scripts, images, and verbal interviews. I also trained a staff of assistants to help in collecting whatever can be collected and preserve large parts of the Palestinian memory, which is at risk of being destroyed. During my research, many documents have been collected from

several resources: British, Israeli and Palestinian. When images are transferred from one archive to another, the image itself is not subject to change, but the purpose of its use and employment is, as is the process in which it is prepared to become an instrument used in shaping the collective memory of the Palestinian people, which was transformed from a collective memory of people fulfilling their national ambitions on their homeland into a diaspora memory.

IS In the archive, you include a couple of images from the Imperial War Museum in London, many of which were taken by soldiers. They photographed specific things like landscapes, particular events, and the everyday life of the troops, and one could say that they made things common to them that were in their surrounding. But within the archive of the IWM we can of course also see that many things are not pictured at all: the everyday life of the population, for example, or the battles themselves, or what happened to prisoners of war. If those images become a source, this record is obviously partial. But it is partial in such a way that one thinks as much of what *is* there as one thinks about what *is not* there. How can one deal with this absence?

MK Images always express partial and incomplete entities and are often made to fulfill the photographer's desire. Cameras sometimes catch details that the photographer is not interested in, and sometimes the camera excludes details that the photographer wanted to exclude. Yet the historian or the documenter must transact with that absence of details through retrieving the context and recompensing the excluded as far as it is possible.

IS In your research, did you come across images that you felt a need to undo, to erase or make disappear? How would you deal with images like this? Can we change the way we look at them? Which images were difficult for you? Did some of them enter the archive of the Umm el-Fahem Gallery?

MK I don't think that there are images that need to disappear, be erased or undone. The historian's role is to retrieve, not to erase, overlook, or exclude. Yet some images were outrageous in a way that makes historians hesitate to show them

or interact with them. An image of that kind was presented in the Um-Elfahim exhibition: it was the image of signing the submission of Um-Elfahim to Israel according to the Rhodes Agreement from the year 1949. Although it was a frustrating image, we presented it, and it was the most stopping image for the exhibition visitors.

IS One could describe many of the historical images you collected as images that were made by photographers of former Imperial powers—for example the images of the British troops from the Battle of Meggiddo. Few historical images are made by Arab photographers. One could argue that one needs to use those images from the “other” to write one’s history, mainly because sometimes the images of one’s own have never been made. The archive in Umm el-Fahem focuses on the history of a place (the Wadi ‘Ara), where maybe there are no older images by Arab photographers, rather than the history of Palestinians, where there would actually be many images by Arab photographers. Why did you make this decision?

MK That is right, and the reason for that is the lack of available techniques for the native people at that time and the poor concern and sensibility towards the importance of images. But I think that the most significant factor that we must consider is that the whole Palestinian heritage was subject to almost complete destruction during the year 1948, and due to that situation, the only remaining version is the victor's version.

IS You never mention the name of the photographer or the context in which the images “originally” were produced or do appear, but you reference them to the archive they come from. I am very interested in this shift that you produce, and in the altered reading that one might have from those images changing through their appearance in an entirely different context. One does not know who the photographer is or what reasons he had for taking the photograph. One only knows the source of the collection from which they’ve come. Our show in Umm el-Fahem (at least its working title) is *Restrictions on the Freedom of Movement*. One could say that the images are not restricted in their movement and that the way you contextualise them

thoughtfully “sets them in a place.” Do you propose a reappropriation of a history through those images that can move freely?

MK That is true. These details are not mentioned in the exhibition, but while constructing the archive, we've been working on retrieving whatever can be retrieved from the context in which the image was taken in the first place— who is the photographer and so on, but we surely believe that retrieving the complete context is almost impossible.

IS The most striking moment for me seeing the exhibition was the relation that you are building between the old images and the new works by contemporary photographers as well as the oral recordings you commissioned. It seemed to me that everything that had been missing in the historical part of the exhibition was thought and produced in the contemporary part: people at work or in their houses and people speaking about their lives. Somehow the exhibition as a whole seemed not so much historical in its approach. It seemed much more that it was visibly constructing a history through those various approaches to making images. Images speaking to each other, creating a space of communication across time. Did you think about a specific story that you constructed, or was this something that came to you in the course of your work?

MK The work is not totally historical. However, in addition to the historical aspect, the exhibition covered other contemporary approaches in a way that creates a dialogue between the past and the present and designs features and proportions of the excluded memory.

IS In many of my older works I was fascinated by photography of the 1910s and 1920s. One of the reasons seemed to me that the medium was not yet bound to a genre. Photographers worked for a many diverse audiences. Römer, the photographer I mentioned above, for example, frequently sold his photographs as picture postcards. Could you tell me something about that time in Palestine? Were there photographers who documented everyday life as well as found new means of publication for their photographs (illustrated media, daily press, picture postcards)?

MK Yes, Palestinian photographers did exist and were active in the big cities in particular. One of them for example is Eesa El Sawabeni from Jaffa city, whose signature appears on many remaining images of that period.

Ines Schaber

dear jaidwa

**photograph from the Matson Collection at the Library of Congress in Washington: Arab Ladies Union Meeting
letter 2009**

Item 24 of 33

Click on picture for larger image, full item, or more versions.



[How to obtain copies of this item](#)

TITLE: Arab Ladies' Union group at K.D. Hotel [i.e., King David Hotel]. Sept. 15 '44.

CALL NUMBER: LC-M32- 13063[P&P]

REPRODUCTION NUMBER: LC-DIG-matpc-04560 (digital file from original photo)

RIGHTS INFORMATION: No known restrictions on publication.

MEDIUM: 1 negative : glass, dry plate ; 5 x 7 in.

CREATED/PUBLISHED: 1944 Sept. 14.

CREATOR:

[Matson Photo Service, photographer.](#)

NOTES:

Title and date from: photographer's logbook: Matson Registers, v. 2, [1940-1946].

On negative: 2 Lamps-F8-4 sec's.

Gift: Episcopal Home; 1978.

SUBJECTS:

[Jerusalem.](#)

FORMAT:

[Dry plate negatives.](#)

PART OF: G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection

REPOSITORY: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

DIGITAL ID: (digital file from original photo) matpc 04560 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/matpc.04560>

CONTROL #: mpc2004003495/PP



ARAB LADIES UNION MEETING (1944)

PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE MATSON COLLECTION AT THE LIBRAR OF CONGRESS IN WASHINGTON D.C.

Dear Jadwa,

Please excuse me for choosing this rather unusual way to get in contact with you. I have tried many ways to find you but so far I have been unsuccessful. Please excuse me as well for giving you a temporary name. I found two group photographs in the Library of Congress in Washington DC in the Matson Collection. They were taken in the same hotel hall, with you sitting in the center of a group of women. And although most of the women in front of the camera had exchanged their place with other women in between the two shots – you sit there unchanged. It seems that time has stood still for you through your concentration in getting your message across to the apparatus in front of you that you focus at with such intensity.

I can't remember if the image struck me right away or if I came back to it after looking at thousands of other images in other archives.

Today, there is still no public Palestinian image archive or an image archive of the region that everybody would be able to use. I had to search in other places, other countries and other archives for the images I felt the need to look for. I can hardly express how strange it sometimes felt to imagine the voyages those photographs chose to

take and the stories and histories that emerged from them and their surroundings.

I think your image struck me in relation to all the other images taken and maybe even more in relation to ones that were so obviously never taken. In the Matson Collection your images received the caption “Arab Ladies Union Meeting at the K.D. Hotel in Jerusalem in 1944”, but there is no further information added about what you were actually doing there or discussing.

It was also hard to find more information in other places about this meeting of yours. The captions seemed to have given some information about the images in the past, but they are really hard to decipher from my position today. What were you doing there? What were you discussing and why did you have these photographs made? Did you decide that there should not be any caption or text that would accompany your image anyway?

As Uncle Berthold said, ‘one must have the courage to say that we have nothing to say about faces on photographs unless there is a caption with some sort of nonsense or lies that we can swallow’. And as Uncle Edward said, ‘in themselves photographs are silent; they

seem saturated with a kind of inert being that overweighs anything they express; they invite the embroidery of explanatory words. What's more,' he says 'in our heads legends arise unbidden which further obscure the photographs.'

But looking at your photograph I am not entirely sure if it does need any caption at all. I am struck by the way you address me. Although you do not really say anything specific.

The way you have sent your picture across time and space to an unknown place and receiver and the way you have set yourself in position, negating foreground and background, controlling every detail for the photographer yourself – I realize that your picture was not taken. What I can see in contrast, is that you have directed the taking of your image. It was your decision, you sending it, and me whom, among many others I suppose, you are addressing.—The position you take on the photographs is old and it took me more than one look to decipher why you posing like this struck me.

Today this posture is so often taken that it is hard to tell if it is a convention that one re-enacts or an appropriation of a convention in which one finds a way to act by oneself. Looking at the images for

a while, it became clear to me that you have acted deliberately. It is an acting through which it is silence that speaks. But can we endure this silence through which you are addressing us? Would our captions or any caption be too loud? Is this image not so much about you but about us looking at you? Is it not that something was taken by you, but that you have given something to us?—A thought, a quietly concentrated, collective moment in awareness of its momentary status? A reminder, an address, a manifesto, a refusal, an exclusion, a celebration, a claim, a demand or a souvenir? Which reading should I choose for myself? And will you—the one I am looking for, the one I might never find, never know, and never call by her real name—be able and willing to answer me?

I am left with one last question, the question I have started with: where did you imagine and where would you wish this image to be shown? Did you think that it could help facilitate or provoke a congruence between memory, actuality, and language?

Maybe you can find a way to get in contact with me.

Yours truly,

Ines



Cabinet 4: Artwork 276



DEAR JADWA (2009), INSTALLATION VIEW, UMM EL-FAHEM GALLERY, UMM EL-FAHEM, ISRAEL

عزيزتي جدوه،

اعزيني من فضلك على اتصالي بك بهذه الطريقة غير المألوفة، حيث حاولت العثور عليك بعدة طرق لكنني لم أوفق حتى الآن. كما وأرجو معذرتك على تسميتك بهذا الاسم المستعار. لقد عثرت على صورتين في مكتبة الكونغرس في واشنطن ضمن مجموعة ماتسون. لقد تم التقاط الصورتين في نفس قاعة الفندق وأنت جالسة وسط مجموعة من النساء. وبرغم أن جميع السيدات قد بدلن أماكن وقوفهن أمام الكاميرا بين الصورة الأولى والثانية، إلا أن مكانك ظل على ما هو. يبدو وكأن الوقت قد توقف بالنسبة لك بينما أنت منهمكة في نقل رسالتك للأجهزة التي أمامك، والتي تستحوذ على جل اهتمامك.

لا أذكر إن كانت الصورة قد أدهشتني فور رؤيتها أم عند عودتي إليها بعد مشاهدة آلاف الصور الأخرى في أرشيفات أخرى. لا يتوفر حتى الآن أرشيف فلسطيني عمومي للصور أو أرشيف خاص بصور المنطقة نستطيع الاستعانة به. لقد اضطررت للفتيش عن الصور الجديدة بالبحث في أماكن أخرى وبلاذ أخرى وأرشيفات أخرى. أحيانا يصعب علي التعبير عن غرابة الشعور الذي يملكني حين أتخيل الرحلة التي سلكتها هذه الصور وما التبتق عنها وعن محيطها من تاريخ وحكايات.

أعتقد أنني تأثرت بصورتك بالنظر إلى باقي الصور التي تم التقاطها وربما تأثرت بها أكثر حين تخيلت تلك الصور التي من الواضح أنها لم تلتقط أبدا. تظهر صورتك في مجموعة ماتسون تحت عنوان " اجتماع اتحاد السيدات العربيات في فندق الملك داوود في القدس سنة 1944"، لكن ليس هناك المزيد من المعلومات حول ما كنتن تعملن أو تناقشن. كما وكان من الصعب العثور على مزيد من المعلومات في أماكن أخرى حول اجتماعك هذا. يبدو أن العنوان قد قدم بعض المعلومات عن الصور في الماضي، لكن من الصعب حل رموز هذه الصور من الموقع الذي ألق فيه اليوم. ماذا كنتن تعملن هناك؟ ماذا كنتن تناقشن ولماذا تم التقاط تلك الصور؟ هل قررتن أن لا لزوم لوضع عنوان أو شرح يرافق صوركن؟

وكما قال العم برتولد: "على المرء أن يتحلى بالشجاعة ليقول أن لا شيء عنده يقوله بالنسبة للوجوه الظاهرة في الصور، إلا إذا كان لديه ثمة عنوان لا ينم عن شيء أو أكاذيب يمكننا ابتلاعها". وكما قال العم إدوارد: "الصور بحد ذاتها صامتة؛ تبدو وكأنها مشبعة بنوع من الجمود يطغى على أي شيء تحاول البوح به؛ إنها تدعو إلى البحث عن تفسير. وفي أحسن الحالات قد تخطر بأذهاننا تفسيرات مرتجلة تزيد من غموض الصور". لكن حين أنظر إلى صورتكن فإنا لست واثقة تماما أنها ليست بحاجة إلى عنوان. أنا متأثرة من الطريقة التي تخاطبتني بها مع أنكين لا تلقان شيئا معينا.

طريقتك في إرسال صورتك عبر الزمان والمكان إلى مكان مجهول وعنوان مجهول، وطريقتك في اتخاذ موقعك في الصورة، لا في طليعة الصورة ولا في خلفيتها، وأنت ضابطة كل التفاصيل للمصور بنفسك. جعلتني أتبين أن صورتك لم تلتقط ما أراه هو أنك قمت بتوجيه التقاط صورتك. لقد كان هذا قرارك

أنت، وأنت التي أرسلتها، وأفترض أنني أنا المخاطبة دون الآخرين. الوضعية التي اتخذتها لنفسك في الصور هي وضعية قيمة، وقد احتاجني النقرس والتمتع بالصورة لكي أفهم لماذا تتخذين هذه الوضعية، وهذا ما أدهشني. هذه الوضعية اليوم هي وضعية معتادة لدرجة يصعب فيها معرفة ما إذا كانت تلك معاهدة يتم إعادة تشريعها أم هو إعداد لمعاهدة يجد من خلالها الفرد طريقة للعمل بنفسه.

يتضح لي من التأمل في الصور أنك كنت تتصرفين بتأن. إنه تصرف يتكلم من صمته. هل نحتمل نحن هذا الصمت الذي تخاطبنا من خلاله؟ أليست العناوين التي نضعها لصورتك صارخة؟ ألقا أنت لست موضوع هذه الصورة بل نحن الذين ننظر إليك؟ أليس هناك ثمة ما أخذته أنت، إنما ثمة ما تعطينا إياه؟ ثمة فكرة ولحظة مركزة للغاية في وعي اللحظة الجماعية العابرة؟ أهي رسالة تذكير أم مخاطبة أم بيان أم تمنع أم استبعاد أم احتفال أم تظلم أم مطالبة أم تذكار؟ أي قراءة للصورة أختار لنفسني؟ وهل لك أنت، أنت التي أبحث عنها، أنت التي قد لا أجدها أبدا، أنت التي لم أعرفك قط ولم أنادك باسمك الحقيقي- هل لك أن تجيبيني؟

بقي لدي سؤال أخير، وهو السؤال الذي ابتدأت به: أين تتخيلين أن تُعرض صورتك وأين تتمنين أن تُعرض؟ هل خطر ببالك أنها قد تسهم في تيسير الانسجام أو استقزاز الانسجام بين الذاكرة والواقع واللغة؟

ربما تهتدين إلى طريقة للتواصل معي.
المخلصة لك،
إينيس

גידוה היקרה,

סלחי לי בבקשה על שבחרתי בדרך חריגה למדי ליצירת קשר עמך. ניסיתי למצוא אותך בדרכים שונות אך עד כה העליתי חרס בידי. אנה סלחי לי גם על שנתתי לך שם זמני. מצאתי שני תצלומים קבוצתיים בספריית הקונגרס בושינגטון באוסף מאטסון. התצלומים צולמו באותו אולם בבית המלון, כשאת יושבת במרכז של קבוצת נשים. ועל אף שרוב הנשים שלפני המצלמה החליפו את מקומותיהן עם נשים אחרות בין שני התצלומים – את יושבת שם באותו מקום. נראה כאילו הזמן עמד מלכת בשבילך כשאת ממקדת את כל מאמצייך בהעברת המסר למצלמה שמולך שאת מביטה בה בעוצמה כה רבה.

אני לא יכולה לזכור אם התמונה הרשימה אותי תכף ומיד אם האם שבתי אליה לאחר שצפיתי באלפי תמונות אחרות בארכיונים אחרים. כיום, עדיין אין ארכיון תצלומים פלסטיני ציבורי או ארכיון תצלומים של האזור שכולם יכולים להשתמש בו. נאלצתי לחפש במקומות אחרים, בארצות אחרות ובארכיונים אחרים כדי למצוא את התמונות שחשתי צורך להתבונן בהן. קשה לי לתאר עד כמה היה לי מוזר לעתים לדמיין את המסעות שתצלומים אלו עברו ואת הסיפורים והאירועים ההיסטוריים שעלו מתוכם ומסביבתם.

אני חושבת שתמונתך הרשימה אותי ביחס לכל שאר התמונות שצולמו ואולי אף הרשימה אותי עוד יותר ביחס לתמונות שלא צולמו מעולם. באוסף מאטסון תמונותיך זכו לכתובית "מפגש של ארגון הנשים הערביות במלון המלך דוד בירושלים ב-1944", אך אין כל מידע נוסף על מה שעשית או במה דנת שם. היה גם קשה למצוא מידע נוסף במקומות אחרים על המפגשים הללו שלך. נראה כי הכתוביות סיפקו מידע מסוים על התמונות בעבר, אך למעשה קשה לפענח אותן מנקודת המוצא שלי כיום. *מה עשית שם? על מה דנת? ומדוע תמונות אלו צולמו!* האם החלטת שלא יהיו כתוביות או טקסטים כלשהם שילוו את תמונתך בכל מקרה?

כפי שדוד ברתולד אמר, "צריך אומץ לומר שאין לנו מה לומר על פנים בתצלומים אלא אם כן יש כתובית עם איזה דבר שטות או שקר שאנו יכולים לבלוע". וכפי שהדוד אדוארד אמר, "תצלומים לכשעצמם הנם אילמים; נראה כי הם מלאים במעין קיום פנימי העולה על כל מה שהם מביעים; הם מזמינים את דברי ההסבר". ועוד הוא אומר, "מראי מקום עולים במוחנו מבלי שיתבקשו ומערפלים את התצלומים עוד יותר". אך כאשר אני מביטה בתצלום שלך אני לא לגמרי בטוח האם יש צורך בכתובית בכלל. אני מתרשמת מפנייתך אלי. על אף שאינך אומרת למעשה שום דבר ספציפי.

הדרך שבה שלחת את תמונתך שחצתה את גבולות הזמן והמרחב למקום ולמען לא ידוע ומחדר שבה הצבת את עצמך, המנוגדת לרקע הקדמי והאחורי, השולטת בכל פרט למען הצלם בעצמך – אני מבינה כי תמונתך לא צולמה. מה שאני יכולה לראות לעומת זאת זה שאת ביימת את צילום

תמונתך. הייתה זו ההחלטה שלך, את שלחת אותה, ואני, ביחד עם עוד רבים אחרים, הם קהל הנמנעים שלך – דמותך בצילומים הנה ישנה והייתי זקוקה ליותר ממבט אחד כדי לפענח מדוע דמותך כה הרשימה אותי. כיום צורת העמדה זו מצולמת לעתים כה קרובות עד שקשה לומר האם זוהי מוסכמה שאנו פועלים על פיה שוב ושוב או ניכוס של מוסכמה שבמסגרתה ניתן למצוא דרך להיות אנו עצמנו.

כשהבטתי בתצלומים במשך זמן מה, התברר לי כי פעלת באופן מכוון. זהו גילום תפקיד שבו השתיקה היא שמדברת. אך האם אנו יכולים לשאת את השתיקה שבאמצעותה את פונה אלינו? האם הכתוביות שלנו או כל כתובית יהיו רועמות מדי? תמונה זו מספרת לנו לא כל כך עליך אלא עלינו המתבוננים בך! האם זהו לא משהו שנעשה על ידיך, אלא משהו שנתת לנו! – מחשבה, רגע משותף, שקט וממוקד מתוך מודעות לזמניותו! תזכורת, פנייה, מניפסט, סירוב, הדרה, חגיגה, טענה, דרישה או מזכרת! כיצד עלי לקרוא את התמונה! והאם את – מי שאני מחפשת, מי שאני לעולם לא אמצא, לעולם לא אכיר, ולעולם לא אקרא לה בשמה האמיתי – תוכל ותרצה לענות לי?

אני נותרת עם שאלה אחת אחרונה, השאלה שהתחלתי בה: היכן חשבת לעצמך והיכן היית רוצה שתמונה זו תוצג? האם חשבת שהתמונה תוכל לאפשר או ליצור התאמה בין הזיכרון, המציאות והשפה?

אולי תוכלי למצוא דרך ליצור עמי קשר.

שלך בכבוד רב,
אינס

Conclusion

Conclusion

Manifesto for the practice of the image archive

Work: Pente and Schaber_Unnamed Series Two out of nine takes on an encounter of Aby Warburg with the Hopi Priest Cleo Jurino in Santa Fe in 1898—*Part 4*: Which images would we like to multiply and distribute ourselves?—*Part 5*: What is the logic of a viewed image?

Manifesto

For a Practice in and around Image Archives

ONE: ARCHIVE

The archive is one of the places that influences our relation to photography. It shapes our reading of images and manages the access we have to them.

TWO: PLACE OF PRODUCTION

The archive is not a place of storage but a place of production, a place in which our relation to the past is materialised and where our present writes itself into the future.

THREE: CRITIQUE

Despite the justifiable critique of the archive and its procedures, we must develop and experiment with other forms and practices of being in and around it. We need examples of practices that inevitably remain, after the critique has been made.

FOUR: THEORY AND PRACTICE

However, there cannot be a separation or hierarchical relation between the theory and the practice of the archive. On the contrary, we aim for an acknowledgement of a practice that develops other forms of knowledge. Thus, the relation between the theory and the practice of the archive is transversal rather than hierarchical or alienated.

FIVE: ARCHIVE AND IMAGE

The critique of the documentary and the discourses of the photographic image need to become part of the practice in and around the archive. Any critique of the documentary requires at once an urgency of practice and an engagement with the genre as a discourse, of which the archive is a part.

SIX: CONTROL

In the recent past, we have spent too much time talking about control. While this has been necessary, we need to acknowledge, enable, and remember other modes of production and sharing, and other practices and networks.

SEVEN: PROCESS

Understanding and acknowledging the archive as part of a more complex photographic process also means necessarily including the various actors and procedures that are part of the production of an image.

EIGHT: ORGANISATION

The classification of images cannot be imposed upon them from the outside. Classification or organisation should be developed through the images themselves— not from encyclopaedic principles but from specific problems, questions, and contexts of production.

NINE: PRODUCTION

The work in and around the archive is itself a process of production. Even though archives are considered neutral and objective, arrangements and valuations do take place. The purpose of questioning archives is not to eliminate the indexical nature of photography and subjectivize it. Rather, the purpose is to put images into relationships that permit the assessment of arrangements and valuations. For this, imagination is required. An image without imagination is quite simply an image that no one spent the time to work on. For imagination is work: that *work time of images* acting ceaselessly one upon the other by collision or fusion, by ruptures or metamorphoses—all of these acting on our own activity of knowledge and thought.

Stefan Pente, Ines Schaber

Unnamed Series

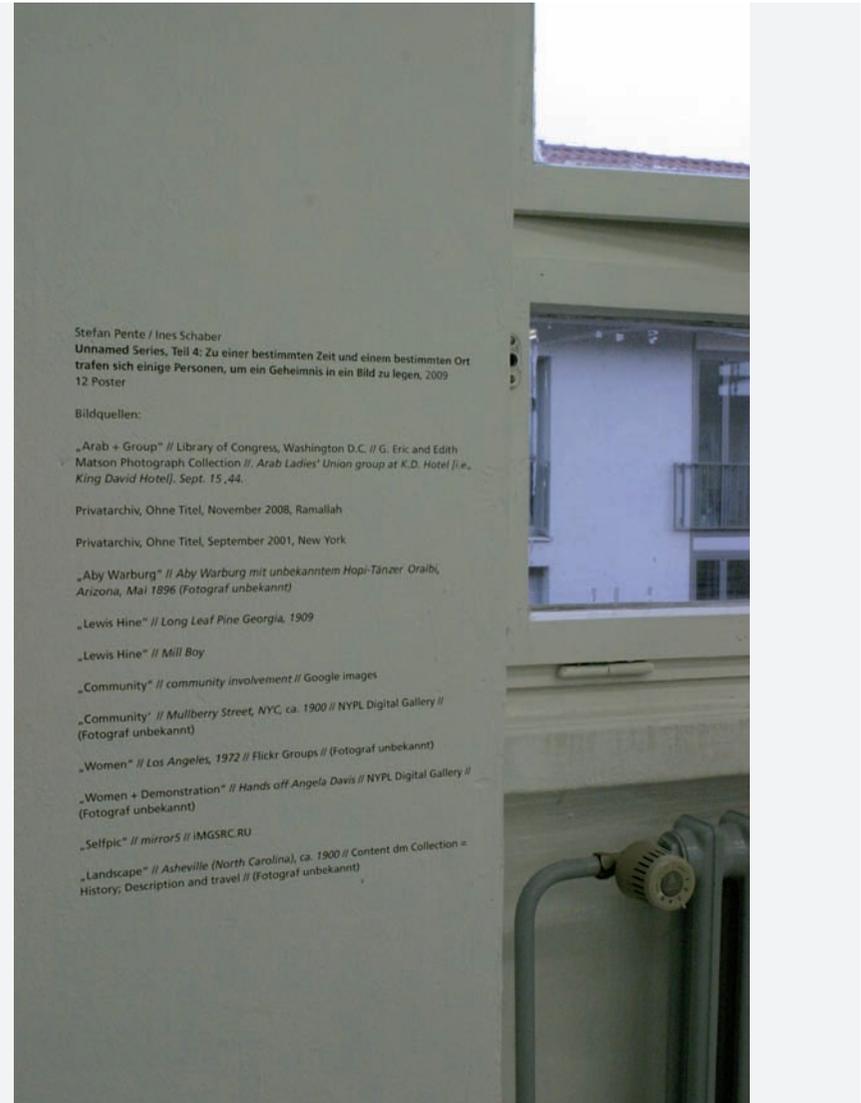
Part 4: At a certain time and at a certain place, a couple of persons met to place a secret into an image 2009

12 posters, table

Part 5: If I follow the logic of a viewed image 2009

Video installation (35 minutes)

Unnamed Series is a series of works by Stefan Pente and Ines Schaber inspired by an encounter that Aby Warburg had with the Hopi Priest Cleo Jurino in Santa Fe in 1898. *Unnamed Series* works on a series on aspects that this famous encounter poses for us. *Part 1*: What is the importance of a representation of a site in which something important has happened? *Part 2*: How to deal with images that should not have been made, or should not have been published? *Part 4*: Which images would we like to multiply and distribute ourselves? *Part 5*: What is the logic of a viewed image? *Part 7*: How can we redefine or rearticulate the space of the secret that is contained in every image? *Part 8*: What would another symbolic practice of an image be? And *Part 9*: What is the answer to Part 1, asked again?

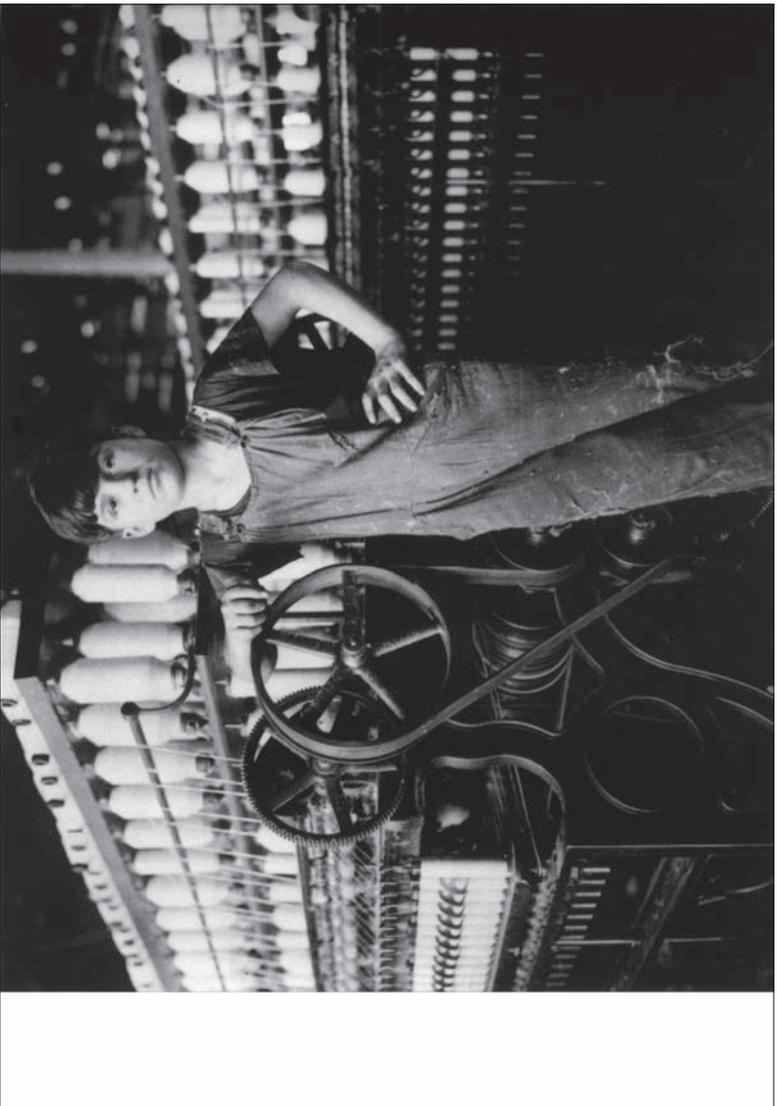


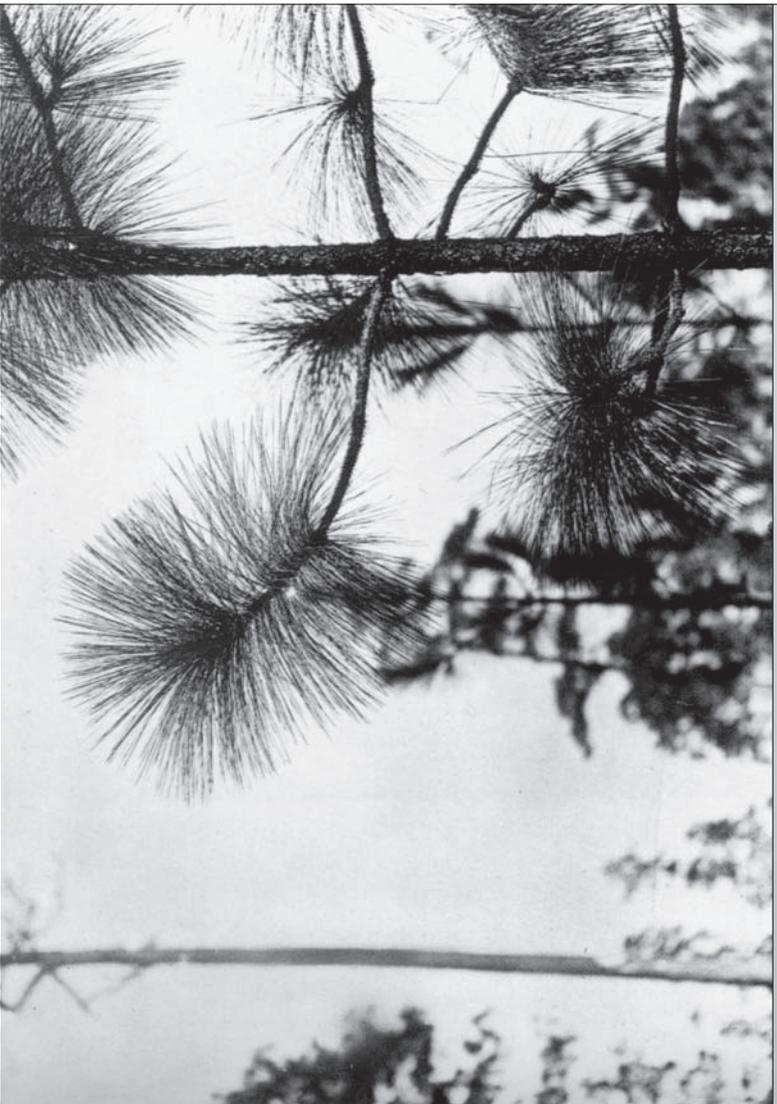


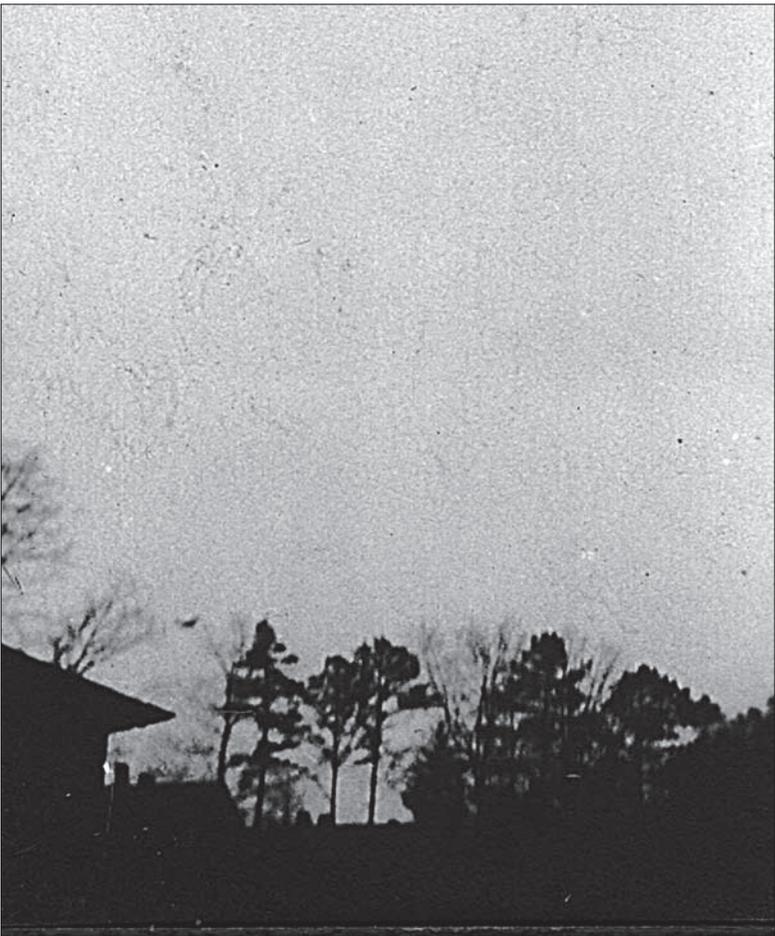
UNNAMED SERIES, PART 4+5, INSTALLATION VIEW, KÜNSTLERHAUS STUTTGART 2009















Video, Text, 28 minutes

The photographed gaze into the mirror sketches a different relationship between the one who photographs, the one who is photographed and the spectator's position. I look into the photographed viewer through the raised camera, into the mirror before me, and, using a general understanding of mirrors, onto myself. In this photographed mirror, I gaze through the camera, now through a mirroring, back into your eyes which are simultaneously my eyes and the eyes of everyone who has stepped into the mirror through the photograph. Your gaze from your viewer's position penetrates, via mirror, the surface of the image in the photographed space by way of the camera's lense, coming out from the photographed viewer, going into my eye. My gaze, coming from your eyes, wanders over a body that must be yours and mine simultaneously, if I follow the logic of a viewed image of a mirrored situation. Not only the audience whom I imagine, but also the real audience in the first as well as in the mirrored mirror of the photographed mirroring, becomes a multiplication machine which turns my body into a body shared with every spectator, a machine which I myself also become.

Which space and which relation between the one who is photographed, the one who photographs, and the viewer's position produces the image? How do these spaces differentiate between the point in time of their production and the point in time of their being viewed? Which stance do we take on them? What kind of work do we carry out while viewing the images and how does this work exert influence on the relations of the participating positions to one another?

In retrospect, it's difficult for me to describe my motivation for making this picture. The site was in itself spectacular, but also the moment was exceptional. Such was the situation: a number of people being transported through time. Only a here, only a now existed. The political situation was tense. The site became a haunt, visited with the purpose of gaining a bigger picture of the conflict's territorial consequences. Why did I take this picture? – I don't know. Even the house didn't occur to me then, at least not that I remember. But is it a house? Or is it the model for a house, the model of a house?

The eye of the camera casts its gaze onto a girl. She reciprocates this gaze, adopts it as her own gaze, turns away from the camera and directs the gaze at someone else in the space. Through herself she reroutes the camera's gaze onto the person or situation that stands in the center of her own attention.

What is and what was the use of these photographs? Do they serve the conservation of a moment in time – the blink of an eye – through the reduction of physical dimensions? Is it the telling of a story, a story itself generated by the photographs, that gives them their function? Are we dealing here with images of memory? Which fleeting moment and which dissipating materiality was it that someone tried to capture in them?

Could one comprehend photographic images as events, as actions, as performances or gestures of communication? Is the meaning of an image distinctly given, or does it have to be developed time and again through its use?

The figure in front of camera 1, the figure behind camera 1, and the situation around camera 1 are known to us. I too, behind camera 2, take on a role which has over time become familiar to us. It is no longer as much the image on its own, made in order to convey something; now it is the conditions and context of its production that we inject into our own images. This image is a moment in the flow of its construction. It doesn't concern anyone. Pedestrians walk by. Someone makes a phonecall. The boy reciprocates the gaze of the camera. His performance, his pose, his big gesture of self-confidence and casualness speaks to the relation between the photographer and himself, the one who poses in front of the camera. The exploitative relationship which is never entirely unavoidable when an adult photographs a child, the information that the photographer yields, his knowledge about relations of portraiture, representation, judgement and use, are all suspended momentarily through the boy's compliance. The notice of the photographer, the attention and respect the boy is shown by an adult, appears to bring the boy, on a personal level, into balance with the photographer. This moment of his visible becoming-subject speaks equally to both the emancipatory strength of his returned gaze and to his co-option by the intention or the assignment of the photographer.

Is a photograph the outcome of a collaboration between various positions who collectively put a secret into an image? What remains when these three positions do not give us any clues about their motivations, purposes and biographies.

Upon the dismantling of a photo studio, pictures of men kissing men and women kissing women were found. Not a single picture depicts a man and a woman kissing. That which could not be shown publicly got replaced. On occasion, situations operate like secret messages as soon as one transmits them, as soon as they arrive into a possible future. Their function, their effect on imminent spectators can differ so completely from anything and everything which one could have ever imagined in the moment of their production.

A man on a balcony speaks to someone outside the picture. Was it the photographer's decision not to include the person being addressed? Was the person, from the camera's position, nowhere to be seen? Was there an agreement among the participants regarding who would and would not be seen?

One of the first photographic genres was portraiture. When, however, did groups start getting photographed; when did groups start having their picture taken? What do the pictures tell us about the motivations behind such gatherings or the mysterious intentions of those alliances? What sort of relationship do the people in the picture have with one another? Did they meet in order to have an exchange, to draw up a manifesto or to develop a declaration? What are the demands/requests/claims that these women are reading to us?

Real and portrayed desire, self-referential pleasure are generated neither through the presence nor through the absence of an audience. The urgency of this self-portrait results neither from an economy of exchange nor from a lack. The self-depicting subject is simultaneously his own object and audience and is aware of the simultaneity and overlapping of these conditions and places. Everyone participating in this self-portrait in the mirror has relinquished any kind of definitive position.

Only a cropped detail of the trees can be seen. We cannot say for certain where the ones who photograph, the ones being photographed, and the intermediary positions have met, why they have met, and who exactly showed up. The image does not offer us the big picture. The cropped detail determines the visible space. We are given neither the possibility to identify with a certain place nor the opportunity to recognize a certain subject. Focus in the foreground, blurry depth in the background. No clearly recognizable conditions of its production. Intermediary and photographer are present and absent. The image illustrates nothing and documents nothing.

These pictures are performances directed at us, performances whose continual repetition of familiar gestures has inscribed itself into the pictures as supposed narratives. Sometimes we distinguish these gestures as our own, other times they become plots in which we can position ourselves. Imaginary games, an exchange of roles, a practice of fictional and actual plots.

Who are these people looking at? Where are they looking? Do they know who is photographing them and for what purpose? Are they addressing a place and a time in the future where this photograph will be seen? A future that was their immediate future, that today is long since past? Which part of their stories, their attention, their forward focused gazes reaches out through time, finding us?

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Archives

The archive of Nancy Holt, located at her private house in Galisteo, New Mexico, USA.

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