

ARTISTS IN THE ARCHIVE



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ARTISTS IN THE ARCHIVE

Creative and Curatorial Engagements
with Documents of Art and
Performance

Edited by Paul Clarke, Simon Jones,
Nick Kaye and Johanna Linsley



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Artists in the Archive

Artists in the Archive explores the agency and materiality of the archival document through a stunning collection of critical writings and original artworks. It examines the politics and philosophy behind re-using remains, historicising this artistic practice and considering the breadth of ways in which archival materials inform, inflect and influence new works.

Taking a fresh look at the relationships between insider know-how and outsider knowledge, *Artists in the Archive* opens a vital dialogue between a global range of artists and scholars. It seeks to trouble the distinction between artistic practice and scholarly research, offering disciplinary perspectives from experimental theatre, performance art, choreography and dance, to visual art making, archiving and curating.

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		11	Introduction: inside and outside the archive Paul Clarke, Simon Jones, Nick Kaye and Johanna Linsley
		25	Liveness and the entanglement with things Nick Kaye
1	REMAKE	58	Monument G as a call for reconstruction Janez Janša
		62	Untitled (After Violent Incident) Tim Etchells
		66	Stuart Sherman's Hamlet: a careful misreading Robin Deacon
		72	Rosemary Butcher: After Kaprow— a visual journey Rosemary Butcher and Stefanie Sachsenmaier
		78	Six questions Zhang Huan
		87	The ghost time of transformation Adrian Heathfield
2	RETURN	104	Jog Shuttler Blast Theory/John Hunter
		110	Our 18 beginnings Lin Hixson and Matthew Goulish
		116	Performing art history: non-linear, synchronous and syncopated times in Performance Re-enactment Society's Group Show (Arnolfini, Bristol 2012) Paul Clarke/Performance Re-enactment Society

		144	Re-enacting the archive: untimely meditations on the use and abuse of repetition Pil and Galia Kollektiv
		151	Archive, repertoire and embodied histories in Nao Bustamente's performative practice Amelia Jones
		177	The patina of performance: documentary practice and the search for origins in The Wooster Group's Fish Story Andrew Quick
3	REVIEW	198	The Lesson of Anatomy Mike Pearson
		204	Authority, authorship and authoring in The Theatre of Mistakes Fiona Templeton
		212	Do the Wild Thing! Redux Bodies in Flight
		218	Understanding negative dialectics Felix Gmelin
		223	9 Beginnings: sonic theatrical possibilities and potentialities in the performance archive Johanna Linsley
		247	Resistance to representation and the fabrication of truth: performance as thought-apparatus Maaïke Bleeker
4	ARCHIVE	274	Talker Catalogue Giles Bailey
		278	Nothing goes to waste Terry O'Connor

284	The Singapore Art Archive Project Koh Nguang How
288	Playing with shadows and speaking in echoes Richard Hancock and Traci Kelly
292	Performing with ghosts: a talk remembered Claire MacDonald
301	The future perfect of the archive: re-thinking performance in the age of third nature Simon Jones
323	List of contributors
326	Acknowledgements
327	Index



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To archive is to give place, order and future to the remainder; to consider *things*, including documents, as reiterations to be acted upon; as potential evidence for histories yet to be completed. As the material in this book demonstrates, the archive is never static nor simply pertains to the past. Archives are comprised in their continuing and future enactment and use; in layers of performance. *Artists in the Archive* explores performances and interactivities within and across the boundaries of the archive and its performance, in exchanges between archives, archivists and communities of performance-makers, scholars and audiences where materials of the archive are defined, used, reiterated, brought out-of-context, *done with*. Such practices erode conventional antagonisms between performance and archive, acknowledging that performance remains and recordings disappear, that archives perform and that documents are performative. To this end, this book approaches archival acts as performative in their aesthetic, social and political staging of the remainder and the document; formulating archives as leaky economies of generative and persistent acts in time; exploring traversals in which materials are placed, removed and implicitly returned to the archive in new variations and redefinitions. This focus also reflects a growing interest in curation, performance and performance theory in ways in which

performance art history can be conserved, communicated and understood trans-generationally and in how we *do* history through practice. Here, as theoretical framework and cultural practice and product, performance provides models for the use and embodiment of archive and archival material. Elaborating this emphasis on equations between the archive and temporality, performance and performativity, this volume brings together essays, scores, reflections and documentations that interrogate the discreteness of documents and the performance events they construct as their objects; questioning distinctions between acts of performance, documenting, archiving and re-use.

To archive also means to encounter and navigate institutions, which are sites of this practice and which also condition how this practice is legible: how events and things are constructed as potential 'evidence'. Here, archiving means engaging with economies: not just markets but systems of distribution of resources, which provoke questions around waste and conservation, and around the commodification of what remains. There are matters of skill and labour that attend the practice of archiving, including questions about the impact that this work has on the body. In these regards, *Artists in the Archive* also addresses the definition of the archive found in dialogues between infrastructural and institutional contexts and individual and communal artistic practices. Institutional archives may amplify the dynamics of authority that operate between the recollection of practice, the recovery of the remainder and truth-making. They may trouble the ephemerality of performance by asserting continuations, repetitions, and entanglements of things and events; by valorizing the recurrence (and performance) of origin; and by configuring new acts of performance as *documentary*. It is a process linked also to the politics and aesthetics of commodification and the development of new technologies, in and through which histories of de-materialization and the definition of performance art are re-written, through the contemporary art market and its archives, as the performative production of objects, relics and traces of value and desire. Practices that counter these tendencies include positioning the relic as *score*, incorporating the agency of objects and things into performance, and exploring counter-hegemonic practices of self-archiving that reiterate identities in layered understandings of self and community, history and performance. Here, the remaking, remixing and review—the repetition and rewriting—of performance exposes and extends the archive's generation of new histories, working over the paradoxes of loss, remainder and recurrence that archival acts precipitate.

These approaches to archive draw on the notion in Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* that etymologically *arche* is not only 'the commencement', but also 'the commandment' (1998: 2): that the performativity of the archive rules and shapes an artistic discipline or art institution's future, commanding the re-writings and re-makings of the past that history can perform. The archive thus brings the artefact to a place where simultaneously memory is claimed and a future authority asserted; to *acts of ordering* that the future use and performance of artefacts or archives inevitably participates in and extends. So, whereas traditional scholarship invariably appraises archives in relation to historical and art-historical narratives, positioning its documents as *evidence* of past events, this book explores models for the future use of documents in practice-as-research, and the potentialities, effects and implications of such processes. Here, objects, traces and relics are read as potential sources of new knowledge and activity; as affected by and affecting emergent histories. In this context, *Artists in the Archive* also looks at how artists and academics can use and reuse documents of past events to inflect and inspire their own performance practice and discourse: it addresses the relationship of archives to the future of creative practices, exploring the tactics of artists and practitioner-researchers in the archive as models for the future use of documents and potential relationships of the archive to the future of art and performance practice. To this end, this volume also shifts an engagement with the archive from being orientated to the past, to the future of the past.

The tenses of archive

As this emphasis implies, archives and archival material also stand at a juncture of archaeology and historiography. The archive houses and orders artefacts - traces, relics, other modes of 'evidence' - the status (and meaning) of which is liminal, *in potential*. Archival material precedes and disrupts historiographical practice, holding 'information' in excess of narratives yet to be written. This emphasis on *potentialities* also underlies the archive's tie to performance. Archive is of interest to performance precisely because its elements are unresolved, are subject overtly to *acts of ordering*, as 'potential evidence,' as that which is to be read; as *score*: while many archival collections of contemporary material are frequently, in practice, yet to be ordered; remaining preserved, held and unavailable, locked away into their potential; *awaiting an act*. Archival collections consequently order things *towards* a future, are caught in the midst of a process of place-making, of a setting of things in an order:

a distribution of points yet to be joined, to be acted out and realized as histories.

In this book, performance as archive captures this troubling of the narrative place of things, where artefacts are hinges between tenses, disciplines, and potential stories. It is a tendency readily reflected in performance practices defined or invested in the return of actions and events that are ostensibly *of* the past: re-stagings of the remains of earlier works through the generation of new performances that become implicitly archival gestures. Such re-doings have proliferated as a strategy in contemporary art and curatorial practices, along with the prevalence of performance as a medium in gallery and museum contexts: contexts identified with the archive, with collection and preservation. Notable examples from many of such recurrences include Marina Abramović's 'cover' of six iconic performances from the late 1960s and 1970s in *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005), André Lepecki's meticulous reconstruction of Allan Kaprow's 1959 *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* in Munich in 2006, the series of re-stagings of 1960s performance in the Performa Biennial in New York in 2007 and subsequent re-performances of Kaprow's participatory happenings in 2011 at Tate Modern. More recently, the Slought Foundation has published its studies for a re-staging of Dennis Oppenheim's *Protection* (1971) in its original location of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Lucia 2016). It is an agenda that extends also to the remaking of work across media, such as Alexandra Prici and Manuel Pelmus' *Public Collection Tate Modern* (2016), in which the artists re-make as performances artworks in other media and held in the Tate collection, including Mark Rothko's *Seagram Murals* (1958–9), Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* (1966), but also including Tania Bruguera's performance work, *Tatlin's Whisper #5* (2008). Re-doings have also extended to old and new media, such as Franco and Eva Mattes staging of Abramović and Ulay's *Imponderabilia* (1977/2007), Chris Burden's *Shoot* (1971/2009), Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972/2010) and actions by VALIE EXPORT and Gilbert and George in synthetic Second Life performances (Mattes and Mattes 2016). Such work also frequently erodes conventional distinctions between performance and its documentation, posing questions over what archives may in practice recall. In this context, Rebecca Schneider has critiqued Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces* as reconstructing performances from their documents in order to document again; naming this practice 'Redocumentment' (Schneider 2009). Rather than performance re-enactments, Abramović enacts or re-does documents, which are used as scripts for performances to camera, to produce new documentation

with high production values. It could be argued that some of the works documented in the pages that follow are 'redocumentments', although often of marginalised artworks, not with the intention of reconstructing, or with higher production values to which capital would accrue. These ideas and practices also place under pressure the notions of 're-enactment', 're-staging' and 'repetition'. Rather than calling the examples included in *Artists in the Archive* re-enactments, we use the term enactment as these iterations do not lay claims to reconstruction, reproduction or a desire to restore a past work to full presence, but instead carry forward a certain life-cycle of the work: elements re-contextualized and transformed; acts invoking a knowledge or memory of other events in which they are also formed. Thus, rather than re-enacting 'to fix a work in its singular (originating) possibilization' (Lepecki 2010: 31), whereby performance becomes known and stabilized in its re-documented history, the works engaged with here take up the strategy Lepecki proposes in 'The Body as Archive: Will to Re-enact and the Afterlives of Dances' of treating past works of performance as 'always incomplete'. Lepecki proposes 'turning/returning to' them 'and experimenting with creative means' of activating their latent forces in an attempt 'to unlock, release, and actualize a work's many (virtual) com- and impossibilities, which the originating instantiation of the work kept in reserve, virtually' (2010: 45).

These continuities between performance, document and archive also have consequences for the idea and practice of performance itself. Where performance acts as a metaphor for the *potentiality* and *acts* to which archive and archiving are deeply linked, so the objects of the performance archive—in their persistence—challenge the dichotomies in which performance and performance art have frequently been defined. The emergent orders, that archives promise, work to trouble the ephemerality of performance by posing questions of continuation, recurrence, repetition and entanglement. In response, this publication also moves beyond the well-rehearsed ontological debates around performance disappearing (Phelan 1993) and performance remaining (Schneider 2011). Instead the texts and artists' pages explore how the apparently stable world of 'things', traces, or remains, and time-based, ephemeral or immaterial performance interact, influence, determine and co-constitute one another. Performance both 'becomes itself through disappearance' (Phelan 1993: 146) *and* remains: it *becomes itself* in a process of disappearance in which 'it' remains entangled in the things by which it is known. In the archive, too, performance cannot be separated from afterlives that continue to circulate and be transmitted in many forms;

body-to-body, through documents, in-and-through practice, re-performance, word-of-mouth and oral history, rumour, embodied memory, and so forth. This emphasis resists the tendency in performance theory to rehearse relationships between performance and matters of loss and death, where performance's ontology in disappearance gains resonance in relationships with mortality, trauma and the rehearsal of irrevocable loss. Such equations are powerfully introduced in Phelan's *Unmarked* (1993) and elaborated explicitly in her essay 'Performance and Death' (1999) as well as writing by Marvin Carlson (2001), Adrian Heathfield (1997) and others. *Artists in the Archive* counters this in its invitation to consider the construction of memory in performance and by the use of objects; and in asking how remains carry traces of the events that produced them.

Here, too, *Artists in the Archive* interrogates practices and discourses reflecting the paradoxical notions of continuity captured by *intangible heritage*: in the persistence of the immaterial; of how cultural continuity is at play in new iterations and inscriptions of performed acts. As Diana Taylor has argued in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), the authors take performance seriously as a means of storing and transmitting knowledge, accepting that performances function 'as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called "twice-behaved behavior."' (Taylor 2003: 2-3). The doing of performance history through artists' workshops in archives, exhibitions and performance relates also to what, Elizabeth Freeman writes, 'following the film critic Laura Marks, might be called haptic historiography [...] ways of negotiating with the past and producing historical knowledge through visceral sensations' (2010: 123). There is also a proximity to what Freeman calls 'erotohistoriography', which 'sees the body as a method' and 'uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform' encounters with the past in the present. Freeman concludes that: 'Erotohistoriography admits that contact with historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, or "corporeal sensations," even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding' (2010: 95-6). In the artists' pages in this volume, the reader will find propositions or case studies for ways of doing historiography through performance, 'touching history' or 'erotohistoriography'; understanding through doing performance, curating, spectating or viewing. Where previous studies have tended to explore the potentiality of the archive either as carrier of meaning, problematizing agency and historical account, or as

a necessary component in the fascination with re-enactment, re-play and revival (see Schneider 2011, Taylor 2003 particularly; also, Borggreen and Gade 2013, Jones and Heathfield 2012), *Artists in the Archive* focuses on the breadth of ways in which archival remains inform, inflect and influence the production of new works, on how artists are incorporating archival material in their creative processes across a range of performance and visual-arts practices. This shifts attention firmly on to the doing of things with performance's material remains, and towards particular encounters with the materiality of such remainders. *Artists in the Archive* thus builds on the interest shown by both artists and scholars in the relationship between the archive and contemporary performance and visual arts. It engages with and moves beyond studies on the re-animation of archives in re-enactment and re-visualization in exhibition to focus on the agency and materiality of the archival document, the role such materials play in artistic process, specifically *the making of new works*.

Traversals

Echoing ways in which practice and use move across the boundaries and order of the archive, in its structure this book is designed to produce open dialogues between artists and scholars exploring a range of relationships between *insider know-how* and *outsider knowledge*, so interrogating and troubling the distinction between artistic practice and scholarly research. *Artists in the Archive* offers a framework of keynote chapters exploring the publication's focus on doing and making with archives, their agency and materiality, set in juxtaposition with clusters of exemplary case studies by artists exploring how archives are active, prompting and intervening in the making of new work. Performance, visual forms and writing by artists are treated as critical practices, whilst criticism and curating are considered in their creative aspects, the resultant exhibition and discursive framings of which transform the remains of art and performance. Case studies are clustered in accordance with affinities and dialogues between actions and processes that REMAKE, RETURN, REVIEW and ARCHIVE. Each practice case study is also represented in a different form on the page, providing a diversity of design intended to extend and reflect upon relationships between analysis and documentation, while laying out a range of models to inspire readers in critical reflections on their own creative engagement with archive. Further to this Introduction, each cluster of case studies is prefaced with a discussion of their practices and themes, as well as introducing the artists and the

contexts in which these various documentations, scores and reflections were generated and developed. In its range of contributions, *Artists in the Archive* also traverses diverse practices from experimental theatre, to performance art, choreography and dance, to visual art making, archiving and curating. The geographical and cultural reach of the volume extends beyond Western Europe and the United States, to Asian, Middle Eastern and Eastern European contexts. This multi-perspectival use is intended to address a wide range of scholars and students, as well as artists and arts professionals, across the disciplines of both performance studies and visual art.

The structuring principle of the volume is played out, too, in many individual contributions, where practice traverses the boundaries and purposes of the archive. Rather than emphasize formal interests around the archive and documentation, these critics and artists are concerned with the philosophical implications and resistant politics of re-using the remainders of art and performance: queering archives, intervening in conventional chronologies and fictionalizing art historical narratives; in mining the socio-political potentiality of reiterating past works in the present scene; of working over the impact of critically re-contextualizing significant works from Western art history in other cultural contexts; and in remaking the self and the relationship between contemporary archival technologies and identity.

Introducing a key theme of the volume, Nick Kaye's opening essay, 'Liveness and the entanglement with things,' reads relationships between performance and its material remainders through recent archaeological concepts of 'entanglement' and the co-dependency of humans and things, to challenge the conventional dichotomy of the live event and its dead remains. Focusing on the life-cycle of performance and conceptual art works through the lens of Marina Abramović's celebrated reiterations of earlier performance works in *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005), Kaye considers how the affordances and agency of objects and things have been integral to performance and conceptual art, including Abramović's own practice. It follows that where the materials and objects of performance afford and shape events and processes, so the locus of the 'live' may shift from a present-tense ephemerality always already lost, towards its processual construction over time; and so in relation to things as well as acts. The artists' pages that follow—clustered as REMAKE—interrogate and embody diverse practices that carry forward things and processes from specific performances, towards the new: from the enactment of scores and scripts (Etchells), to the re-imaginings and reconstructions

of events and objects (Butcher and Sachsenmaier, Janša, Zhang), to speculations on the dream as documentation (Deacon). Adrian Heathfield's 'The ghost time of transformation' directs an analogous debate towards other reiterations of ephemeral forms, calling on Henri Focillon's 1930s treatise on *The Life Forms in Art* to consider the fluidity and metamorphosis of forms and the affective nature of things. Heathfield's focus is the 2012 exhibition 'Moments. A History of Performance in 10 Acts' at ZKM Karlsruhe, Germany, which comprised performances by ten female artists, whose first iterations were in the 1960s and 1970s. Exemplifying, for Heathfield, curation as a self-questioning mediation, 'Moments' was openly 'assembled, reconfigured and disassembled over a period of 52 days'; a processual approach invested also in the iterations of each of the works re-visioned. In this workshop-style process, Heathfield argues, these enactments were "'returned" through morphological display to conditions of relation, flow, and multiplicity from which they had been extracted'. Observing the interrogation of the institution—and re-staging itself—in the contingent return of Simone Forti's *Face Tunes* (1967), a performance concerned with Forti's sense of 'the tangibility of the invisible,' Heathfield poses questions of the 'here-not here' in which the 'return' of the work and its materials occur, is experienced, and regains critical and political force. In turn, this essay presages practice case studies clustered as RETURN: of the diverse materials of an artists' earlier works (Blast Theory) or the beginnings of works now being unmade (Hixson and Goulish); of the repeated and meaningful absence of work retold (Performance Re-enactment Society); of the archive in performance and as repetition (Pil and Galia Kollektiv). In this section, too, Paul Clarke's contribution explicitly brokers between essay and document to interrogate the temporal practices of 'Performing art history' through the Performance Re-enactment Society's *Group Show* (2012). Drawing on Elizabeth Freeman's concept of 'temporal drag,' Clarke and PRS explore the asynchronous effects of embodying ostensibly absent objects, of performing installations no longer present in transitions to time-based narrative, in partial and palimpsestual recollection; a process whose effects challenge linear art histories and settled taxonomies of practice.

Subsequently, Amelia Jones and Andrew Quick address, in different practices and contexts, artists' use of self-archive as process and source in the making of work. Jones focuses on Nao Bustamente's performative self-display of the traces of identity, and so of 'the human subject as *archival*'; a history of work that Jones associates with Yayoi Kusama, Urs Lüthi, Martha Wilson,

Eleanor Antin, Lynn Hershman Leeson and others. Bustamente's enactment of the self-as-archive through performance engages with live performance, video, installation, talk show and reality TV formats; while in 2015 for her exhibition 'La Soldadera', Jones notes, Bustamente overtly adopted the roles of art historian, archivist and curator to explicitly engage with archive through performance. Jones analyses Bustamente's working over of the 'embodied' and 'textual' archive: her mining of the various media her performances occupy for their capacity to stage or produce the self: her 'queering' of the figure of the trickster; her conflating multiple readings of her performative and actual self. Through these tactics, Bustamente at once enacts her self-as-archive—and in doing so appropriates multiple cultural archives—and plays toward an excess that disrupts the production of these social identities, resulting in a highly politicised confusion of categories. Counterpointing this, Quick elaborates The Wooster Group's self-archiving of their performance history through and in relation to their production of new work. Positioning documentation as a core practice, and a ghost in the machine in the company's generation of performances and creative process, Quick opens the question of how the documentary act generates and inhabits performance; and how simultaneously performance 'affords' the documentary act. It is a dynamic that reflects, again, on the performativity of archive and, as Quick proposes, the nature of performance as a truth-making practice. The artists' pages that follow implicitly speak back to this discussion in practices of REVIEW: in archaeologies of the performing body, through the readings of how the marks, the damage, of earlier performance form mnemonic texts of the flesh (Pearson) and in the revisiting of scenes and processes of performances' production in encounters between 'flesh and text' (Bodies in Flight). REVIEW is also enacted in looking back at processes of authorship, and the 'truth-making' that ties authoring and authority to performance history and the archive, as well as the cross-generational re-doing and repetition of actions that form personal and performance legacies (Templeton, Gmelin).

The final cluster of documents, ARCHIVE, is in juxtaposition with Maaïke Bleeker's and Johanna Linsley's contrasting explorations of the limits and stabilities of the archive in performance. For *'9 Beginnings: sonic theatrical possibilities in the live art archives'*, Linsley approaches the 'futurity' of the archive through sonic terms: echo, voice, rhythm, amplification; to reframe archive as a site 'of potential and possibility,' a fulcrum between an order representing past events and the indeterminacy of scores

and new departures. In doing so, Linsley mines *9 Beginnings*, a performance project by the Chicago-based performance company Every house has a door, made in the reiteration of the beginnings of performance works by others, a process that works to amplify the sense of possibility and potentiality of each replayed point of departure. Here, Linsley emphasises the company's focus on auditory elements that operate at the margin of the archive's conventional things, objects, statements and compositions: ambient sound; sensed vibration; silence; individual and communal 'rhythm'; Roland Barthes' 'idiorrhymy', where individuals maintain idiosyncrasy while forming the aggregated rhythm of a participating community. Defining the core elements and dynamics of performance as an unfolding dialogic event, these auditory identities evade the archive's conventional order and materiality. Extending the limits of archive and representation toward a sharply political arena, Maaike Bleeker's analysis of Rabih Mroué's thought-images explores themes and questions raised also in the Performance Re-enactment Society's *Group Show*, in which absent works are re-told through an overtly theatrical apparatus. Here, though, via Mroué and Saneh's *Who's Afraid of Representation* (2005) and Mroué and Elias Khoury's *Three Posters* (2000), Bleeker explores the aesthetics and ethics of the theatricalised first person re-telling of early conceptual art and performance art, alongside troubling recollections and allusions to aspirations to martyrdom and acts of terror. Mroué's various performers offer testimonies through which documentation is weighed against diverse modes of knowing; as the 'thought-image' is interrogated as a fabrication of truth and as truth-making, and images are treated as sites where 'conflicts are fought out and negotiations happen'. Reading performance and the testimony and legacy of political events via performance theory and criticism, Bleeker works over the complicated relationships between documentation, archive and aesthetic and political spheres in dispute, observing how the images and things placed in the archive mediate the performance of thought. Where these essays engage with the aesthetic and political limits of the archive, the final cluster of artists' pages that follow present ARCHIVE as a verb, as a practice of performance. These contributions encompass speculations over non-linear practices of archiving where performance becomes a principal methodological tool (Bailey); recollections about that which the archive overlooks or elides and that forms its supplement (O'Connor); the conflation of archiving with aesthetic practice and form (Koh How); and considerations of archive as call to remain, energy, mark, as critical point, as lack, and culture (Hancock and Kelly). In closing the book, Simon Jones'

essay 'The future perfect of the archive: re-thinking performance in the age of third nature' looks towards the future of performance and the archive. Here, Jones reads the engaged processes that characterize the performer and performance's *being with* the archive, as producing the archive as a recursive space of *doing* in which there is a lack of reflective distance between archives and the pasts they may be used to invoke. Through reflections on Heidegger, Jones contrasts the experiences of being in the midst of performance's collaborative unfolding of archival and other spaces, with the exhaustive and unedited memory and order promised by the digital archive. It is a reading that drives towards an account of the phenomenal uniqueness of performance, captured here in the resistance of performance practice to the ubiquity of 'the third nature' of humanity, where 'all knowledge will be externalized'.

In *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider describes the archive as an architecture housing archival acts, which constitute and delimit a structure as archive (Schneider 2001). In this reading, ephemeral events of use and re-use, rituals of appraisal, accessioning and arrangement, traditions of conservation and remediation, of searching, researching and reinterpretation challenge the stability of the order whose 'commandment' otherwise faces the future. In her study, *Where is Ana Mandieta? Identity, Performativity and Exile*, Jane Blocker extends this position toward historiography, stating that 'we need a history that does not save in any sense of the word; we need a history that performs' (1999: 134). *Artists in the Archive*, and the artists and writers whose work is compiled here, address 'archive' as something done, rather than the archive as a static place or repository, so arguing for an archive that performs. This archive is a set of processes, rather than a building where documents of art and performance are put away or domiciled. Rather than considering the archive as a structure or proper place, the reader of this book might keep in mind Foucault's definition, from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002), which André Lepecki cites, that an archive is 'a system of transforming simultaneously past, present, and future' (2010: 30). *Artists in the Archive*, of course, even as it seeks to open these debates, and like any academic volume claiming its authority, also makes its own strongly archival gesture and so 'commandment' in Derrida's sense. Nevertheless, we hope that the traversals, in which this book finds its form, counter Schneider's description of the architecture of the archive, in favour of a *making-place* where the document and its boundaries are sufficiently uncertain as to generate unexpected questions and offer conversations for future practices.

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Monument G (1972) directed by Dušan Jovanović, performer Jožica Avbelj. Photo: personal documentation of Jožica Avbelj.

Someone comes and lights me.
Again someone comes and snuffs me.

The only uttered text we added in the reconstruction is composed of quotes from the reviews of the original *Monument G*. Teja Reba speaks it while running on the spot¹:

Monument G...

is an experiment—Andrej Inkret
is not an experiment—Peter Božič

is a ritual theatre—Borut Trekman
is not a ritual theatre—Veno Taufer

is a new theatre—Muharem Pervić
is not a contemporary theatre—
Marija Vogeltnik

is improvised—Borut Trekman
is not improvised—Peter Božič
is a laboratory theatre—Andrej Inkret
is pure theatre—Peter Božič
is a kinetic monologue—Marija Vogeltnik
is total theatre—Veno Taufer
is yoga—Dalibor Foretić
is an etude for an actress and various
instruments—Borut Trekman
is a concert for an actress—Boško
Božović
is a concert for a young body—MES
Festival
is contemporary dance—Marija Vogeltnik
is physical theatre—Boško Božović
is kinetic theatre—Muharem Pervić
is avantgarde theatre—Veno Taufer

Monument G shows us that, with its thematisation of the past, it created the possibilities that, in the reconstruction, this thematisation refers to the performance itself. Precisely because the historical situation was fictionalised, the final writing on the wall is 'And what if we made it all up?'. *Monument G2* stages the fundamental tension included in every historicisation, the tension between history and story, facts and their construction, between *l'histoire* and *l'histoire*. At the same time, it shows that some performances are predisposed to be reconstructed. It would therefore not be surprising if *Monument G* were reconstructed again in 30 years with three generations on stage.

Notes

- 1 Running on the spot in the 'Someone Walked the Lonely Road' scene was not recorded. The part performed by Reba was a combination of two runs on the spot from two performances: *The Power of Theatrical Madness* (1984) by Jan Fabre and *Baptism Under Triglav* (1986) by the Scipion Nasice Sisters Theatre. In these scenes, both performances refer to historical sources, in Fabre's performance, they enumerate important theatre performances of the 1960s and 1970s, whereas the Scipions refer directly to Meyerhold's biomechanics. Reba, therefore, does not refer only to the absent original but also to the history of what happened between the original and the reconstructed *Monument G*.

scenography and objects concerned took on an increasing importance with speculations regarding the 'rightness' of the weight, touch and 'feel' of materials (such as the cubes). However, such aspects of the experience of performing the original piece cannot necessarily be drawn from a videotape or instruction set. In retrospect, I have wondered how *material rules of engagement* for the performers could have been more clearly delineated. A year before my reenactment of Hamlet, I visited the Washington Square East Galleries in New York to see the Stuart Sherman retrospective entitled *Beginningless Thought/Endless Seeing*. In the rear of the gallery were two of the cubes used in Sherman's *Hamlet*. Of course, with the usual prohibitions of touching in the gallery, the one thing I could not do was pick them up.

In 2010 I conducted an interview with Anna Kohler, one of the performers in Sherman's *Hamlet* in Paris in the early 1980s. She says '...I was totally surprised that to him it was really important that I was a good juggler, and that I was able to juggle his cubes in the show...just so'. Kohler uses the word 'juggle' to describe her interaction with the cube, whereas Jansen writes of the performers 'tumbling' the cube. In semantic terms, tumbling could imply a downward motion, or the image of something falling, whereas the image of the juggler suggests the upward motion of balls tossed into the air, and kept there. Lacking the luxury of time to unravel such complexities during the process of making the reenactment, my own rehearsal notes settled upon 'a mutual rotation of the cube between two performers'.

How might the notion of 'tumbling' or 'juggling' have affected my approach to constructing the cubes? As I now write, a series of further questions emerge suggesting other possibilities for potentially absurd forms of micro management. Did the thickness of the Styrofoam matter? What would have been the implications of a solid or hollow interior for accuracy of the chosen action? In watching the videotape again (and again), it is somehow

reassuring that neither 'tumble' nor 'juggle' seems to quite match what the performers appear to be doing.

I mean, you can try and shape it, to a degree, mold it, but at the same time, you have to respect what it is. And after I make certain choices, or certain choices become inevitable, in terms of actions and certain objects [...] I have to accept their logic. And so in a sense all of my pieces are misreadings [...] this is why I did a piece called *A Careful Misreading*. That once I had accepted the fact that my understanding (it's going to be the essence of an impression) all impressions are partial. I don't know if this is the definition of the word, but an impression [...] it can't be comprehensive. I don't think you can have a comprehensive understanding of anything.

Sherman interviewed by John Matturri, c. 1978. Transcribed by Robin Deacon from cassette recording, quotation reproduced with permission of John Matturri.

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of opened performance histories an impetus may be found:
to continue the affective force of the techniques of survival
and experiments in existence that make a creative life liveable.

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Cavalcades in Learning: Chris Sullivan,
January 28 1989

(He applies a fake nose, then 'enters'
by passing through a small curtain
and over a step that separates the
private stage right from the public stage
left. The floor creaks as he walks on it.)

Hello. It's a pleasure to (inaudible.)
(He huddles over a light bulb on
the floor.)

I'm sorry to say there's a slight delay
in the arrival of Mr. Sullivan. For the
moment the program will have to be
curtailed, and this is a, a, a mistake on
my part and in no way reflects that of
the vanity of part of this fine profession.

(He 'exits,' then 'enters'.)

Excuse me.

(He huddles over the light on the floor.)

Sorry to say it once again, there's,
a small mistake has come up, a small
lesion has opened as you might say
in my ability to one might say cope or
in a word troubleshoot certain situations
that might arise in the planning of
a production such as this. Please remain
seated. I assure you that Mr. Sullivan
will be on in just a moment. (He picks up
a hand-crank pencil sharpener.) In the
meantime I will sharpen any dull pencils
in the audience.

(Pause.)

(He 'exits,' puts down the sharpener,
'enters'.)

Excuse me, I'm sorry to be abundant,
(huddles over light) I'm going to have to
tell you that I'm afraid Mr. Sullivan has
been injured in a terrible accident.
He's not able to go on with the program,
please go back to your homes, you'll get
a partial refund at the door.

(He half 'exits' then turns back.)

Oh! An imposter has volunteered to go
on in the place of the injured performer.

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that of aesthetic appreciation—is added to the repeated structure, which therefore preserves the dominance of the new over the repeated, a spectacle of a transcendental representation of repetition if you will.

By contrast, a final example, from the field of cinema, demonstrates how the image and practice of re-enactment can produce an excess to this structure of newness. In Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Alien: Resurrection*, the fourth sequel in the sci-fi series, Ellen Ripley, the protagonist of the franchise, is resurrected in a lab from an amalgam of human DNA and the DNA of the alien with which she had been 'pregnant' at the time of her death in the previous sequel. This resurrection, exactly like Friedrich the Second's, occurs several hundreds of years after the initial death, and like the Emperor's return, it too carries with it some additional weight from beyond the grave. In the film's most gripping scene, Ripley wanders into one of the laboratories on board the spaceship she wakes up on to discover the mutant bodies of the many previous unsuccessful attempts to resurrect her and separate her DNA from the alien's, no doubt in order to exploit the alien as a new type of weapon. Half humanoid and half exoskeletal, these odd creatures, pickled in respectable looking formaldehyde jars, are a reminder of the grotesque work of historical repetition. This is obviously a smart comment on the tendency of the culture industry to repeat itself with the best Fordist predictability: an industry that would rather spend a large budget on the fourth reiteration of an already established brand because current manufacturing logic dictates that demand (i.e. brand loyalty to a classic cult film) precedes supply. But the scene offers an even stronger critique of industrial repetition. The horrific in the lab scene amounts to the excess carried forward in the act of industrial repetition, an accumulation of the corporeal misery embedded in productive labour. By the time the new is eventually produced in Ripley, and this is the very essence of newness—a new type of a hybrid human-alien—it already carries within it this horrific accumulation of capitalist torture.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the last scene of the film sees the alien Ripley approaching earth as a vengeful harbinger of death. The Victorian looking space lab is the archival site that absorbs this grotesque accumulation of re-enacted histories. Confronted by this perverse catalogue of mutations, Ripley cannot but take upon herself the role of horrific violence, encapsulated in these many generations of exploited bodies and now finally unleashed upon the world. If repeated newness and novel repetition are, as Debord and Adorno both claim, structural features of capitalism, they carry within them a dialectical potential that explodes, like a newborn alien, directly from the soft belly of contradiction. In the accumulation of infinite reenacted historical moments we can eventually have the dialectical transformation of quantity into quality. When Ripley and the alien approach the fertile hunting grounds of earth we know that this time death will be quite final, not just for our heroine, but for the world that has given birth to her.

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Rather, she provides the opportunity for us all to engage in multiple levels of meaning-making as history-making in relation to the complex multilayered histories relating to women fighting in the Mexican Revolution. In this way, Bustamante reminds us, precisely, that we are involved in these histories and that they are never static, final, or 'true'. Her method of interweaving archival, interview, and phenomenological elements nonetheless also reminds us that our historical reconstructions of the past should engage with the specificities, often archival, sometimes in interview form, of these histories. We must not just make things up but play imaginatively across what is given to us archivally in order to reconstruct the past. This is a thrilling and rich proposition, essentially performing a complex relationship between our embodied experience today, engaging with these objects and sounds and spaces, and these histories.

As such, Bustamante's endpoint for now is drawing us into a hugely poignant but also acerbically funny space for ruminating on how we relate ourselves to the past, in this case, a particular group of women who have largely been erased from history. *La Soldadera* and Bustamante's career-long exploration of the performative self as a whole instantiate the sharp and productive role the archival can play for an artist attuned to its embodied or 'repertoiral' resonances for the present.

Notes

- 1 See Jon Caramanica's rather unflattering account of Bustamante's stint on the show (Caramanica 2010 and 2010a).

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What *Fish Story* playfully and, indeed, movingly acknowledges is that a performance work is always built from the tracery produced by all those who participate in its construction: a performance work always stands in some relation to the performances that came before and will come after it. Strangely paralleling Benjamin's observations on history, truth and origin, *Fish Story* seems to return again and again not only to the history of The Wooster Group, its performers, director and multiple and layered scenographic practices. It appears to return to the question of performance itself, what its constituent parts might be and what an interrogation of these parts might provoke. Following on from Benjamin, this performance can be thought of as an archival event in which the problem and potential of the document and the activity of dealing with documents (the documentary) is presented before us. The patina of performance, patterning. This would account for the work's exquisite choreographic ordering. Is not this patterning central to our experience of the temporal flow of performance, indeed, of life itself, where elements come before us through a process of appearance and disappearance, across and in time and in space? There, gone. There, gone. There in the memory, in the body, there in the faint lines on the floor.... There... There... There...

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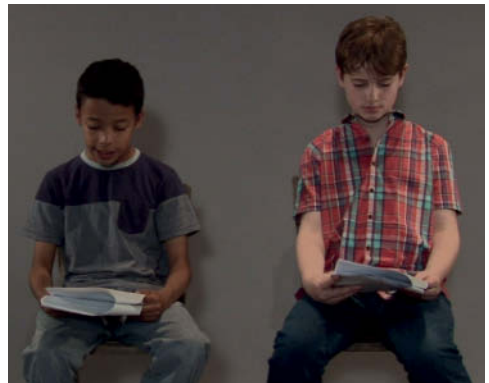
As in Gary Hill's work *Remarks on Colour* from 1994, where he makes his 12-year-old daughter Anastasia read from Ludwig Wittgenstein's 1950 book *Remarks on Colour* at an age where she cannot understand what she reads, my son and the children in Bristol also struggle with a text that is far too transcendental and abstract for them to understand at that age. The difference between Gary Hill's daughter Anastasia and my son David, Gracie, Jayden and William from Bristol is that Anastasia within her father's staging is talking about her own presence while my son and the children from Bristol are talking about the future they will inherit. In both cases these works talk about how strange it is to address and plan your future before you know what you want and desire.

The better organised the means of the individual, and thus the possibilities of resistance, the more obliged are public affairs, as a societal rule, and for self-preservatory reasons, to integrate whatever the individual is, in order to prevent its neurotisation of public affairs, and thus to prevent accidents or catastrophes. The claim for totality must sustain the individual even if it does not reveal it, or, from its standpoint, is unable to reveal itself to it. The contents of the collective rest with the individuals. If it is not conscious of the tensions of the extreme, as a correlation, it is simply padding without an engine, an emasculated patriarchal-collective ego in the veiled twilight of an infantilised alienating animal. Its cultural effigies are the symbols of the death-chambers of waiting in one-dimensional mass-communication. It would strengthen the collective ego's power to anticipate itself in concrete utopias and in its images, and send packing the eternal animal's revelations, which seeks the end of the world with consternation, ascension and panic.

trans. from Gmelin 1969



Felix Gmelin, *Negative Dialectics*, one channel video with sound in 03,16 min. loop, filmed in Weimar, Germany, June 25 2010. Excerpt and translation from German to English: the artist. Courtesy Vilma Gold, London.



Felix Gmelin, *Left and Right and Right and Wrong*, one channel video in 16,52 min. loop, filmed in Bristol, UK, July 4 2013 depicting two children reading two texts: John Sutherland's praise of capitalism from his 1948 film 'Make Mine Freedom' juxtaposed with an excerpt from Sven Wernström's 1971 book 'Kamrat Jesus', (Comrade Jesus) explaining Jesus was a Communist.

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- 1 This was also addressed in the video lecture about *Three Posters* in which Mroué explains why they had decided to stop performing this work. El Sati's suicide mission, he explains, took place in 1985, that is, before suicide bombing would become a trade mark of Islamic terrorism. Jamal El Sati and other Lebanese suicide bombers were secular, left-wing resistance fighters of the National Resistance Front fighting the army of a foreign nation, Israel, occupying their country. They were not terrorists threatening civilians in order to destabilise other nations. Yet in the early 2000s this image of suicide bombing started to dominate public imagination to such an extent that it also became part of the perception of El Sati's deed and Mroué's performance about it. At this moment Mroué decided to stop performing *Three Posters*.

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project of documenting the history of arts practices in Singapore that may be in danger of disappearing, with particular attention to gaps, mistakes and discontinuities.

The duo hancock and kelly reflect on a multi-year collaborative archiving project titled *Lone Duets*. The artists individually created a series of performances, each a 're-make' of the others' previous performance, so that a chain of performance reactions developed over an extended period. In framing this process as a fleshy archive, the artists also figure the archive as leaky, and capable of contamination and infection.

Finally, writer and performer Claire MacDonald extends this consideration of the body as an archive, particularly aging bodies and women's bodies. The piece emerges from a collaboration with Charlotte Vincent, who had, in 1999, recreated a performance of MacDonald's from 1984 (in *Carrier Frequency*, originally a collaboration between Impact Theatre and novelist Russell Hoban, and recreated by Stan's Cafe). Nearly a decade later, in 2008, Vincent and MacDonald found a quick and close connection which MacDonald attributes, in part, to a shared gestural vocabulary based on Vincent's efforts to reproduce and inhabit MacDonald's physicality.

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creating a feeling of urgency and charge, how it might work the understanding that comes through doing.

Written into the idea of archive, is the sense that what may be important to a future researcher, maker or thinker cannot be predicted, that the nugatory and the crucial are categories we cannot determine for future sensibilities. But whilst there is always an aspiration to completion in the

idea of archive, the complete collection or the Borgesian library and its promise of an infinitely open and generative store shifting kaleidoscopically moment by moment, endlessly re-ordering, there may also be the suggestion of the small and random point of contact, a handwritten question that fires across new synaptic gaps: so, now, what shall we do?

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driven by the crossings across between its making and its archiving *in and amongst fleshes*: every new generation of performers who must go back to those foundations, or rather, must re-build those foundations *as if for the first time and now amongst the techno-archives of our third nature*. Hence performance's challenge to knowledge as a progressive accumulation of data-sets, objects and reproducible procedures leading towards a 'better', (so say) more 'productive', future; and also performance's fundamental relationship to its archives—as perpetual reinvention in the promise of what's to come.

Perhaps the point in any case is that repetition is never enough. You need to inhabit the structure, breathe differently in it; breathe a second time. You need to know it in order to forget it (partially). [...] You need to know and unknow.

Etchells 2015: 93

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