

## **Archive Fever: Photography between History and the Monument**

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The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from far off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale.

—Michel Foucault<sup>1</sup>

No single definition can convey the complexities of a concept like *the archive* such as are contained in Foucault's ruminations on the subject. The standard view of the archive oftentimes evokes a dim, musty place full of drawers, filing cabinets, and shelves laden with old documents, an inert repository of historical artifacts against the archive as an active, regulatory discursive system. It is this latter formulation of the archive that has engaged the attention of so many contemporary artists in recent years. *Archive Fever* explores the ways in which artists have appropriated, interpreted, reconfigured, and interrogated archival structures and archival materials. The principal vehicles of these artistic practices—photography and film—are also preeminent forms of archival material. The exhibition engages with various modes of artistic production in which the traffic in photographic and filmic documents is not simply emblematic of the development of a vast mass-media enterprise. Rather, it delves into critical transactions predicated on opening up new pictorial and historiographic experiences against the exactitude of the photographic trace.

### **Photography and the Archive**

What are the aesthetic and historical issues that govern photography's relation to the archive? From its inception, the photographic record has manifested "the appearance of a statement as a unique event." Every photographic image has been endowed with this principle of uniqueness. Within that principle lies the kernel of the idea of the photograph as an archival record, as an analogue of a substantiated real or putative fact present in nature. The capacity for mechanical inscription and the order of direct reference that links the photograph with the indisputable fact of its subject's existence are the bedrock of photography and film. The capacity for accurate description, the ability to establish dis-

tinct relations of time and event, image and statement, have come to define the terms of archival production proper to the language of those mechanical mediums, each of which give new phenomenological account of the world as image. Photography is simultaneously the documentary evidence and the archival record of such transactions. Because the camera is literally an archiving machine, every photograph, every film is *a priori* an archival object. This is the fundamental reason why photography and film are often archival records, documents and pictorial testimonies of the existence of a recorded fact, an excess of the seen. The infinitely reproducible, duplicatable image, whether a still picture or a moving image, derived from a negative or digital camera, becomes, in the realm of its mechanical reproduction or digital distribution or multiple projection, a truly archival image. Accordingly, over time, the photographic image has become an object of complex fascination and thus appropriated for myriad institutional, industrial, and cultural purposes—governmental propaganda, advertising, fashion, entertainment, personal commemoration, art. These uses make photography and film critical instruments of archival modernity.

When Walter Benjamin published his essay on art<sup>2</sup> in the 1930s, photography had been in use for a century. His reflections took up more than the question of aura; he was concerned with how the shift from the hand-fashioned image to the mechanically produced and infinitely reproducible image manifests a wholly new mode of pictorial distribution, a shift not only indexical but temporal. Because eye/hand coordination organized by the camera gave reality a different look, the liberation of the hand from image making had a deep impact on questions of cognition and action. This change of artistic and pictorial parameters became a specific phenomenon of modernity. The advent of mechanical reproduction initiated an archival formation that would overtake all relations to the photographic record: the systems of production and distribution and, more recently, the processes of permanent digital archivization and inscription. Since Kodak's invention of commercial processing capacity at the end of the nineteenth century, the photographic analogue derived from the negative has not only generated an endless stream of faithful reproductions—calling into question the foundational claims of originality on which the pictorial aura of hand-fashioned images depended—it also set the entire world of users into a feverish pace of pictorial generation and accumulation. This archival madness, a “burning with desire” to transpose nature into a pictorial fact, and consequently into an archival system, is succinctly expressed in a letter written by Louis Daguerre to his business partner Nicéphore Niépce: “I am burning with desire to see your experiments from nature.”<sup>3</sup> Many other desires soon followed, and would go beyond nature; they would encapsulate the entire mode of thinking the world framed within a picture. The desire to make a photograph, to document an event, to compose statements as unique events, is directly related to the aspiration to produce an archive. The character of this archive is captured in W. J. T. Mitchell's notion of “the surplus value of images,”<sup>4</sup> in which the photograph also enters the world of the commodity. The traffic in the photographic archive rests on the assumption of the surplus value that an image can generate.

The proliferation of the snapshot, of domestic photographic production, clarifies this process. However, we know that in this guise of image production—its crudest, most sentimental form—the making of a photograph is part of a constant construction of *aide-mémoires*, a gigantic machine of time travel, as much teleological as technological. Stanley Cavell describes this in relation to automatism,<sup>5</sup> a mechanism through which we return to the past, compiling indexes of comparisons and tables of facts that generate their own public and private meanings. The snapshot that documents scenes of life's many turns—birthdays, holidays, and events of all kinds—perhaps exemplifies the most prominent aspect of the private motivations for image making, for it not only records that burning desire for the archival, it also wields a formidable ethnographic meaning. The photographic image, then, can be likened to an anthropological space in which to observe and study the way members and institutions of a society reflect their relationship to it. From family albums to police files to the digital files on Google, Yahoo, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, mobile phones, digital cameras, computer hard drives, and assorted file-sharing programs, a vast, shapeless empire of images has accrued. Organizing and making sense of them in any kind of standard unity is today impossible. At the same time, we have witnessed the collapse of the wall between amateur and professional, private and public, as everyday users become distributors of archival content across an unregulated field of image sharing.<sup>6</sup> In this prosaic form, the photograph becomes the sovereign analogue of identity, memory, and history, joining past and present, virtual and real, thus giving the photographic document the aura of an anthropological artifact and the authority of a social instrument.

Beyond the realm of the snapshot is another empire—an imperium, to be specific—connected to a more regulative, bureaucratic, institutional order that invigilates and exercises control over bodies and identities. It was this order whose repressive function in the nineteenth century would combine Auguste Comte's philosophical positivism and a hermeneutics of power, along with the system to territorialize and unify knowledge from diverse sources, imbuing the system with scientific authenticity, even if its unity was fictive. Positivism fueled the emergence of many quasi-scientific photographic endeavors, one such being Alphonse Bertillon's police archives in Paris, in which he elaborated a series of standardized tests and measurements to decipher the "criminal type." In his seminal essay "The Body and the Archive,"<sup>7</sup> Allan Sekula reflects on the work of Bertillon, and of the English statistician and pioneer of eugenics Francis Galton, both of whom discovered in photography an instrument of social control and differentiation underwritten by dubious scientific principles. Their projects, Sekula writes, "constitute two methodological poles of the positivist attempts to define and regulate social deviance."<sup>8</sup> The criminal (for Bertillon) and the racially inferior (for Galton) exist in the netherworld of the photographic archive, and when they do assume a prominent place in that archive, it is only to dissociate them, to insist on and illuminate their difference, their archival apartness from normal society.

## Archive as Form

The photographic archive is one of the many ways in which archival production has been developed within the context of art. Marcel Duchamp's miniaturization of his entire corpus into a deluxe edition of reproductions, organized and codified in an archival system cum mobile museum titled *La boîte-en-valise* (1935–41),<sup>9</sup> is certainly not the first of such programmatic engagements of the work of art as archive, but it remains one of the most rigorous. Ever since he fashioned this ur-museum in a suitcase, there has existed a fascination within art with the procedures of the museum as archive,<sup>10</sup> as a site of reflection on the prodigious output of historical artifacts, images, and the various taxonomies that govern their relationship to one another. By faithfully creating reproductions of his works that approximate photographic facsimiles, and at the same time creating the conditions for their organization and reception as an oeuvre and an archive, Duchamp appeared to have been grappling with a dilemma, one which placed his works "between tradition and oblivion," to borrow an apt phrase from Foucault.<sup>11</sup> *La boîte-en-valise* is not only a sly critique of the museum as institution and the artwork as artifact, it is fundamentally also about form and concept, as "it reveals the rules of a practice that enable statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is *the general system of the formation and transformation of statements.*"<sup>12</sup> Decades later, such a system was amplified by Marcel Broodthaers in his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968).<sup>13</sup> If the framework for Duchamp's box is the myth of a coherent monographic artistic identity, Broodthaers's endless iteration of photographic copies of eagles and associated objects positioned his archive not in a logic of homogeneous unity but in a field of nonhierarchical heterogeneity. According to Rosalind Krauss, Broodthaers's gambit ushered in what she terms the *post-medium condition*.<sup>14</sup>

Writing about Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (1964–present), an open-ended compendium of photographic panels and tableaux initiated by the artist as a reflection on the relationship between the photographic and historiographic, Benjamin Buchloh implicitly recognizes that the principle of collectivization—an important function of museums and archives—has been integral to photography's disciplinary method from its inception. Projects such as *Atlas*, he notes, have "taken as the principles of a given work's formal organization photography's innate structural order (its condition as archive) in conjunction with its seemingly infinite multiplicity, capacity for serialization, and aspiration toward comprehensive totality . . ." <sup>15</sup> Buchloh casts doubt, however, on the historical coherence of such practices, labeling them "unclassifiable within the typology and terminology of avant-garde art history,"<sup>16</sup> and concluding that "the didactic and mnemonic tracing of historical processes, the establishment of typologies, chronologies, and temporal continuities . . . have always seemed to conflict with the avant-garde's self-perception as providing instantaneous presence, shock, and perceptual rupture."<sup>17</sup> Buchloh argues that Richter's *Atlas* inherited the conditions of this archival impasse:

Marcel Duchamp, *La boîte-en-valise*, 1935–41  
Leather valise containing miniature replicas, photographs, and color reproductions of works by Duchamp, and one "original" (*Large Glass*, collotype on celluloid) (69 items)  
Overall 16 x 15 x 4 in. (40.6 x 38.1 x 10.2 cm)  
© 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Succession Marcel Duchamp



Yet, at the same time, the descriptive terms and genres from the more specialized history of photography—all of them operative in one way or another in Richter's *Atlas*—appear equally inadequate to classify these image accumulations. Despite the first impression that the *Atlas* might give, the discursive order of this photographic collection cannot be identified either with the private album of the amateur or with the cumulative projects of documentary photography.<sup>18</sup>

Inasmuch as any sensibility may wish to impose a restrictive order on the archive, then, the ability to do so is often superceded by concerns governing the disjunction between systems and methods. According to Lynne Cooke, the logic of *Atlas* is impeded by the impossibility of assigning a singular rationality to its existence as a unity: “*Atlas* hovers,” she writes, “between the promise of taxonomic order as divulged in the archive and the total devastation of that promise . . .”<sup>19</sup>

From the above we can establish that the archive is a compensation (in the psychoanalytic sense) of the unwieldy, diachronic state of photography and, as such, exists as a representational form of the ungainly dispersion and pictorial multiplicity of the photograph. The archive as a representation of the taxonomy, classification, and annotation of knowledge and information could also be understood as a representative historical form, which Foucault designates as a historical *a priori*, defined as a field of archaeological inquiry, a journey through time and space; one whose methodological apparatus does not set “a condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements.”<sup>20</sup> Whatever the statements, however encompassing its accumulated, tabulated, indexed, and organized form of representation may appear, it is also true, as Foucault notes, that

the archive of a society, a culture, or a civilization cannot be described exhaustively: or even, no doubt, the archive of a whole period. On the other hand, it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say—and to itself, the object of our discourse—its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, disappearance. The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable. It emerges in fragments, regions, levels . . .<sup>21</sup>

How is the validity of statements posited in an archive to be judged? For Jacques Derrida, statements acquire legitimacy through “a science of the archive,” which “must include the theory of . . . institutionalization, that is to say, the theory both of the law which begins by inscribing itself there and of the right which authorizes it.”<sup>22</sup> The archive achieves its authority and quality of veracity, its evidentiary function, and interpretive power—in short, its reality—through a series of designs that unite structure and function. The archival structure defines what Derrida calls the principle of “domiciliation,” by

Gerhard Richter, *Atlas*, 1964–, installation views, Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 1995  
Courtesy Dia Center for the Arts  
Photo: Cathy Carver



which the institutional form is achieved, the archive as a physical entity is manifested in a concrete domain: “The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently . . .”<sup>23</sup> He compares this condition of existence, the process of domiciliation, to a house arrest.<sup>24</sup> The archival form is fundamental to the archive’s ability to create the “condition of validity of judgements” (Foucault) to be undertaken. Derrida calls this function “consignation,” the task through which the archive conducts “the functions of unification, of identification, of classification,”<sup>25</sup> and so on. However, consignation is to be understood in terms that “do not only mean, in the ordinary sense of the word, the act of assigning residence or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of *consigning through gathering together signs*.”<sup>26</sup> The very activity of consignation, therefore, “aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration.”<sup>27</sup>

The terms of reference for Duchamp’s *La boîte-en-valise*, Broodthaers’s *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, and Richter’s *Atlas* correspond precisely to both Foucault’s and Derrida’s different takes on the archive. The portable box in which Duchamp organized his then-extant works as reproductions, or the heterogeneity of Broodthaers’s curatorial arrangement, or Richter’s perpetual commentary on photography as a mnemonic object, become and form a logic of domiciliation and consignation (gathering together signs that designate the artist’s oeuvre), as well as a condition of reality of the statements of each of the individual works, the narrative it has to convey, the *a priori* archive of the artist’s practice. Such methods conform to what Hal Foster identifies as the “archival impulse”<sup>28</sup> that suffuses current artistic practice. Artists interrogate the self-evidentiary claims of the archive by reading it against the grain. This interrogation may take aim at the structural and functional principles underlying the use of the archival document, or it may result in the creation of another archival structure as a means of establishing an archaeological relationship to history, evidence, information, and data that will give rise to its own interpretive categories.<sup>29</sup>

### **Intelligence Failure / Archival Disappointment**

Permit me to recall an important moment in recent history: the frantic search for evidence of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) undertaken by a coterie of United Nations investigators in the months leading up to the Iraq War in 2003. The scramble to find the weapons included a search through the Iraqi archives for documents containing evidence of a weapons system’s many components: designs, bills of procurement, building plans, site maps, photographs of laboratories. The Iraqi administration presented the inspectors with volumes of documentation, reams of paper, a mountain of information showing the initial attempts to constitute a weapons program and later efforts to dismantle the operational capacity to build an arsenal of future destruction. Meanwhile, the U.S. wanted

to retain exclusive hermeneutic authority over any “intelligence”: if the “intelligence” accorded with the U.S. view, then it fulfilled and consolidated the Bush administration’s claims; if it contradicted those claims, the burden of proving the negative rested on the other side. We witnessed this catch-22 in relation to both the United Nations inspectors led by Hans Blix and the International Atomic Energy Agency officials, who were all but accused of being agents of Iraqi disinformation.<sup>30</sup> As the Bush administration’s “slam dunk”<sup>31</sup> theory of an *a priori* indisputable fact—the existence of WMD—unraveled, it attempted (without success) to bolster the moral imperative behind its threats to invade Iraq.

We now know the full extent of the fraudulence of U.S. and British intelligence (truth) claims.<sup>32</sup> The calculated manufacture of “intelligence” to fit the policy of Iraq’s invasion disturbs the integrity of and confidence in the archive as a site of historical recall, as the organ through which we come to know what has been, that is to say, the raw material constituting knowledge and a reference in which to read, verify, and recognize the past.

The manipulation of evidence to justify war underscores the imperatives of modern intelligence gathering as a fundamental drive toward acquisition and control of information and comprehensive knowledge. Of course, the idea of an empire that sees “intelligence” as the total mastery and domination of an adversary through its superior power of clairvoyance is not new. Thomas Richards, author of *The Imperial Archive*, locates the origins of this archival impulse in nineteenth-century Victorian England, during the heyday of British imperialism. Induced into a fever of knowledge accumulation and intelligence gathering, the Victorian archival industry began a process whereby information concerning the known world was synchronized and unified.<sup>33</sup> With the establishment of institutions such as the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Photographic Society, the British Museum, and the Colonial Office, Victorian Britain initiated one of the most prodigious archive-making periods in modern history. Although it was an empire of vast territories, patrolled by mighty naval fleets and army regiments, imperial Britain was above all founded on the production of paper, assorted documents, and images, all of which spawned other documents, along with the systems organizing them and the rules for distributing their content. The process of archival synchronization and unification was accomplished by reconciling specific forms of discrete, quantifiable, and tested knowledge (positive knowledge) into universal principles of aggregated data. As Richards points out, the objectives of such unification were attended by ideological manipulation: “Unawares, the archival gaze has combined the triple register of inquiry, measure and examination to prepare data to be acted upon by the variable modalities of power.”<sup>34</sup>

Overseeing this immense accumulation of data—photographs, images, maps, surveys, intelligence, taxonomies, classifications: Derrida’s “science of the archive”—was the imperial periscopic eye. It was in this era that the impenetrable territory of Tibet—impenetrable, that is, to imperial ambition and the Western gaze—was mapped. In the absence of reliable maps of the Himalayan territory, and unable to send British surveyors into Tibet, the British India Survey resorted to an ingenious plan

devised by one Major Thomas G. Montgomerie, a member of the Royal Engineers Corps: the survey and mapping of Tibet would be conducted with “native explorers,”<sup>35</sup> actually a network of Hindu pundit spies from the Indian Himalayas. Beginning around 1865, the pundits, disguised as Buddhist pilgrims traveling through Tibet, compiled detailed statistics and measurements of their journey. Peter Hopkirk traces this story of daring archival espionage that may equal Google Maps for its pinpoint precision:

Montgomerie first trained his men, through exhaustive practice, to take a pace of known length which would remain constant whether they walked uphill, downhill or on the level. Next he taught them ways of keeping a precise but discreet count of the number of such paces taken during a day's march. This enabled them to measure immense distances with remarkable accuracy and without arousing suspicion. Often they traveled as Buddhist pilgrims, many of whom regularly crossed the passes to visit the holy sites of the ancient Silk Road. Every Buddhist carried a rosary of 108 beads on which to count his prayers, and also a small wood and metal prayer-wheel which he spun as he walked. Both of these Montgomerie turned to his advantage. From the former he removed eight beads, not enough to be noticed, but leaving a mathematically convenient 100. At the hundredth pace the Pundit would automatically slip one bead. Each complete circuit of the rosary thus represented 10,000 paces.

The total for the day's march, together with any other discreet observations, had somehow to be logged somewhere safe from prying eyes. It was here that the prayer-wheel, with its copper cylinder, proved invaluable. For concealed in this, in place of the usual hand-written scroll of prayers, was a roll of blank paper. This served as a log-book, which could easily be got at by removing the top of the cylinder . . . Then there was the problem of a compass, for the Pundit was required to take regular bearings as he journeyed. Montgomerie decided to conceal this in the lid of the prayer-wheel. Thermometers, which were needed for calculating altitudes, were hidden in the tops of the pilgrims' staves. Mercury, essential for setting an artificial horizon when taking sextant readings, was hidden in cowrie shells . . .<sup>36</sup>

This arduous operation, in which archive making was subtended by the principles of espionage, was undertaken in service to the empire's insatiable appetite for knowledge of the unknown. Beyond that, such knowledge had to be compiled, “classified,”<sup>37</sup> unified, and submitted to tools of regulatory control. Constructing these “paradigms of knowledge . . . seemed to solve the problem of imperial control at a distance.”<sup>38</sup> By the turn of the century, the details of the Tibet archive had been transformed into “classified” information “placed under the jurisdiction of the state.”<sup>39</sup>

Classifying information, data, or knowledge is today a pervasive method of regulatory control of the archive. And this control over the flow of information is strengthened by other networks of archival manipulation or data generation. Google Earth, for instance, allows some aspects of its spatial modeling to be public while others are suppressed in the interest of national security. Tibet is but one of many examples of the attempt to construct an empire of archival knowledge as part of the regime of national security. Richards cites Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*—a book ordered around the pursuit of power and authority—as an example of the obsession with correlating classified knowledge and national security. Throughout the nineteenth century, the “great game” of imperial expansion was an acquisitive game of spatial dominance but one invested with the superior capacity to control the flow of information through the archive. Knowledge was equated with national security; accordingly the imperial archival system positioned “itself not as the supplement of power but as its replacement.”<sup>40</sup> The archival construction of Tibet, the intimate knowledge gained of this closed society, began as a work of map making and geography linked to espionage and intelligence gathering. From that, an information society was created. But it was the foundational principle of the state's power to monopolize knowledge, and to excise from public view archive material it deemed too sensitive, that became the paramount legacy of imperial archive making.

This is the proper context in which to read the battle over archival information between the U.S. and the Iraqi government arbitrated by the United Nations. Let us recall another episode in that spectacle of archival disinformation: when then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that a document obtained by British intelligence and in the possession of American officials showed indisputably that the Iraqi regime was actively seeking to buy “yellow cake” uranium from the African nation of Niger. The document supporting Powell's claim was soon revealed to be a forgery, the “pure fantasy” of an intelligence agent. In this story of archives and counter-archives, are we not reminded of how deeply embedded the processes of archival production are in the modern state form? For the gathering and interpretation of intelligence—more accurately, data—are nothing more than the obsessive principle of archival formation.

### **Archive as Medium**

The artworks that comprise this exhibition represent some of the most challenging interpretive, analytical, and probing examples of contemporary art's confrontation with and examination of the historical legacy of archival production. The artists presented here are not concerned simply with accumulation, sorting, interpreting, or describing images, though they surely do engage these practices. They are also motivated by a process described by Foucault as a “tracing-back to the original precursors, towards the search for a new type of rationality and its various effects.”<sup>41</sup> Here we witness firsthand

how archival legacies become transformed into aesthetic principles, and artistic models become historicizing constructs, so that in the works, and the ways in which they are arrayed before us, we experience firsthand their effects. The variety and range of archival methods and artistic forms, the mediatory structures that underpin the artists' mnemonic strategies in their use of the archive, and the conceptual, curatorial, and temporal principles that each undertakes, point to the resilience of the archive as both form and medium in contemporary art. In the works, we are confronted with relationships between archive and memory, archive and public information, archive and trauma, archive and ethnography, archive and identity, archive and time.

These are some of the issues this exhibition seeks to illuminate. *Archive Fever* does not simply organize for the viewer the visual effects of the archival form or medium. Nor is its central preoccupation with assessing the cleverness of the critiques of archival truth inherent in some of the examples presented here. The aim is not to produce a theory of the archive but to show the ways in which archival documents, information gathering, data-driven visual analysis, the contradictions of master narratives, the invention of counter-archives and thus counter-narratives, the projection of the social imagination into sites of testimony, witnessing, and much more inform and infuse the practices of contemporary artists.

The "archival impulse" has animated modern art since the invention of photography. As many historians have argued, the principle of the archival was anticipated by the regulative order of the photographic dispersal through mass media. This dispersal had ideological implications, especially with regard to forms of propaganda. Mass media enabled the public manipulation of photography. And it came to determine the status of the documentary apparatus. In his essay "An Archival Impulse," Hal Foster elaborates on the long history of archivization as a structural mode of organizing the proliferating images of photographic media, particularly in some of the formats of the early avant-garde in Russia and Germany between the world wars, for instance, the photofiles of Rodchenko and photomontages of Heartfield. Taking us into the era of Richter's generation, Foster writes that the early modernist uses of the photographic index and the archival attributes they establish between public and private, between documentation and commentary, critique and analysis, power and subordination, were "even more variously active in the postwar period, especially as appropriated images and serial formats became common idioms (e.g., in the pinboard aesthetic of the Independent Group, remediated representations from Robert Rauschenberg through Richard Prince, and the informational structures of Conceptual art, institutional critique, and feminist art)."<sup>42</sup>

These various modes of deploying appropriated images and using photographic documentation to inform the principle of the artwork were largely what gave rise to the conceptual system of archival photography, the mode by which many came to know, through documentation, varied actions or performances of contemporary art that relied on the archival reproductions of the artistic event or action, a world of practices staged as much for itself as for the camera.<sup>43</sup> Without the photographic or filmic

record of events or performances, the condition of reality on which their received effect as works of art depended would not have existed. Durational pieces that rely on recording or documentation, such as the work of Ana Mendieta, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, and Gabriel Orozco, whose activities of inscription were only possible through the medium of photographic representation, are examples of this kind. In others, such as the emblematic work of Robert Smithson, the physical work and its citations stand as two separate systems. But this relationship between past event and its document, an action and its archival photographic trace, is not simply the act of citing a preexisting object or event; the photographic document is a replacement of the object or event, not merely a record of it. "The document . . . is no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only the trace remains; history is now trying to define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations."<sup>44</sup>

### **Documents into Monuments: Archives as Meditations on Time<sup>45</sup>**

The enumeration of these various archival registers, in which the formats of contemporary art address the urgency of visual information in the age of mechanical reproduction, is one of *Archive Fever's* referential sources, but the exhibition also extends beyond it. The issue grappled with here is not so much the artist's employment of archival logic but, rather, the artist's relationship to images or instruments of mass culture or media in which the archival is sought out—especially in the digital arena—as part of a broad culture of sampling, sharing, and recombining of visual data in infinite calibrations of users and receivers. We are fundamentally concerned with the overlay of the iconographic, taxonomic, indexical, typological, and archaeological means by which artists derive and generate new historical as well as analytical readings of the archive. In an illuminating passage, Foucault captures the "burning desire" behind some of these types of archivization, in which artists undertake to "'memorize' the *monuments* of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say . . ."<sup>46</sup> Here, a fundamental question persists: it concerns the relationship between temporality and the image, or, rather, the object and its past. According to Foucault, this relationship is a prevalent one, so much so, he claims, that "in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*."<sup>47</sup>

Much of the photographic production of Craigie Horsfield exists in these splices of time and image, document and monument. In the late 1970s, Horsfield commenced one of the most sustained and unique artistic investigations around the governing relationship between photography and temporality. Working with a large-format camera, he traveled to pre-Solidarity Poland, specifically to the industrial city of Krakow, then in the throes of industrial decline and labor agitation. There he began shooting a series of ponderous and, in some cases, theatrically antiheroic black-and-white photographs

comprising portraits, deserted street scenes, and machinery. Printed in large-scale format with tonal shifts between sharp but cool whites and velvety blacks, these images underline the stark fact of the subject, whether of a lugubriously lit street corner or a solemn, empty factory floor, or portraits of young men and women, workers and lovers. The artist worked as if he were bearing witness to the slow declension of an era, along with a whole category of people soon to be swept away by the forces of change. *Magda Mierwa and Leszek Mierwa—ul. Nawojki, Krakow, July 1984* (1990) is a haunting double portrait of a couple, a bearded man and a woman, each staring so intently at the camera that it appears they were themselves witnesses to, rather than specimens of, a passing age. The scene is lit in such a way that the background literally dissolves around the sitters, enveloping them in inky blackness. The image emits an eerie silence, as if touching the sentient melancholy of the man and woman. With their stern, stubborn mien, they stand before us as the condemned.

*E. Horsfield. Well Street, East London. August 1987* (1995) is, again, exemplary of Horsfield's careful, annotative as well as denotative employment of the photographic as the weight of time that presses upon the image. The principle of photographic portraiture, in this instance, the depiction of the body, defines the traditional imperative of Horsfield's approach to image making. The second aspect of his production takes it further: it sketches the subtle time lag between the creation of the image and its realization a few years later. In this rich black-and-white print of a reclining female nude, the surrounding field is rendered in sharp, tonal contrasts around the shadowed, slightly turned face. As with many of Horsfield's photographs, the caption indicates the exact date of its making, next to the year of its full realization as a work. In so doing, he calls our attention to the importance of archival time in the consideration of the image. Here, the time of making functions as a shadow archive next to the flat panel of the large-scale print.<sup>48</sup>

Horsfield's work is engaged with a conscious temporal delay of the archive, illustrating both a slice of time and its slow immensity. Even if not quite a *longue durée*, the time lag between photographing and printing is often protracted—sometimes years elapse before an image is conjured, a fact made clear in the captioning. Horsfield insists on the viewer's ability to decipher the denotative aspect of the image as a literal archive of time, as if the exposure is drawn out over many years. His work is one of two examples—the other being Stan Douglas's *Overture*—presented here that captures the archival potential of photographic technology as fundamentally an archaeology of time. Horsfield's photographs—unique, uneditioned, unrepeatable—operate at the break between temporalities, between archival time and linear time. They are often active meditations on the very nature of time and how it acts on memory and experience, encompassing it and slowing it down. The disjunction between the instant in which the image is recorded and the moment it is finally printed produces two instances of the archive: first, the archival time of the image, and second, the archival register of its reproduction. The difference, manifest in the analogical conditions of the tactile, materialist photographic medium of film and the instantaneous quality of digital production, is impossible to parse in Horsfield's method.

At the same time, according to his mode of working, new technology does not permit us to do just what he has been so adept at accomplishing—a kind of old-fashioned, predigital photography of non-instantaneous reproduction that allows the image to gel in the artist's own consciousness long before it emerges from its glacial substrate.<sup>49</sup>

Stan Douglas's *Overture* (1986) is similarly concerned with the relationship of archive and time, of time passing as a moving image, as a narration. *Overture* is a looped, 16mm film that stitches together two separate footages shot by the film division of the Edison Company in the Canadian Rockies: one shows Kicking Horse Canyon, shot in 1899, the other White Pass in British Columbia, shot in 1901. To explore the theme of temporality as it structures experience and consciousness, Douglas employs an audio track of recited passages from Marcel Proust's insomniac novel, *In Search of Lost Time*.<sup>50</sup> That Proust's book about time and its disappearance is contemporaneous with the Edison Company's film is not coincidental, since Douglas has carefully synchronized text and image as a meditation on the very logic of time as it bears on the question of history and identity, nature and culture, positivism and romanticism.

In contrast to Horsfield's photographic projects, which are constituted around perceptual breaks in linear time, Douglas's *Overture* emphasizes cyclical temporality. By deploying a looping mechanism, the filmic narrative appears seamless. Though the film is stitched together in three sections, and the passage from Proust is incorporated as six separate segments, through two rotations, the loop allows the experience of the film to occur as an endless revolution of image and time, suturing breaks in time and images, transforming the filmic space into a closed circuit.<sup>51</sup> Scott Watson argues that this endless rotation is not merely a technical representation of time, a mode that Douglas has explored in other projects; rather, the looping device becomes the means by which a confluence occurs between "mechanical time, which proceeds through repetition, and human time, which is known through memory."<sup>52</sup> The careful calibration of mechanical and mnemonic temporality begins at the first emergence of the film as a self-consciously driven operation through the camera's sweeping views of the landscape up to the point where the train carrying it plunges into the blankness of the tunnel, only to emerge on the other end where the manipulated editing posits a steady continuation. Through this continuation, the establishing shot of the first sequence becomes the anchor for the circularity of the loop to suggest nonlinear temporality. The break in linearity that is crucial to Douglas's proposal delinks the film from its narrative construction, showing instead "its rhythmic, hypnotic effects on the viewer, in an experience of time-depth and repetition."<sup>53</sup>

Jef Geys's work *Day and Night and Day and . . .* (2002) belongs to this temporal category in which the archive is used to elicit the boundless procession of discrete levels of time, as a juncture between past and present. Geys's work provokes an interaction with the archive as a chronotope—that is, a coordination of space and time. It is both a personal and cultural meditation on time and the archive. Constituted out of more than forty years of photographic output comprising tens of thousands of

images taken by the artist from the late 1950s to 2002, the thirty-six-hour film is not only structurally about the flow of images from a time past into the present; by virtue of its languorous movement, unfolding one panel at a time, the form of its delivery is also intended to confound the ability to distill the film into an index of a life's work. Working with the basic format of an inventory, in almost chronological register, the photographs are activated as moving pictures by slow dissolves. Nothing much happens in the film apart from shifts in tone, gradations of muted gray and lightness, as the images unspool in a horizontal band. Unlike Richter's *Atlas*, Geys's work is not one of accumulation and collecting; rather, it is an inventory of ephemeral images, slowly and arduously exposed one frame followed by the next, and next, *day and night and day . . .* The temporal relationship between each image is established through sheer density. The basic means of this proto-cinematic work belie the conceptual nature of its endless pursuit—as in the monologue to Douglas's *Overture*—of history as the passage of time, as the relentless inscription of private memory onto the space of a collective public culture.

### Archive and Public Memory

For nearly a century, artists have turned to the photographic archive in order to generate new ways of thinking through historical events and to transform the traditional ideas surrounding the status of the photographic document. In recent years, artists have interrogated the status of the photographic archive as a historical site that exists between evidence and document, public memory and private history. Few have matched Andy Warhol's profound reflections on photography's morbid hold on the modern imagination. Though seemingly interested in celebrity and media spectacle, Warhol grasped the potential of such images as a means of plumbing the psychic ruptures in the American collective imaginary, as a speculum for examining the violence, tragedies, and traumas of the American self.<sup>54</sup> Building on archival analyses of visual history, oftentimes generated in the media—as is the case with *Race Riot* (ca. 1963)—considerations of the relationship between documentary information converge with aspects of witnessing and collective memory. The uses to which Warhol subjected the archive of mass media have engendered and encoded some of the most sustained reflexive accounts on photographs as an incunabulum of public memory. Warhol's images culled from media reports of misfortune and privation (suicides, car crashes, electric chairs, racist police officers and vicious dogs), delineate a grid of social lives. Anne Wagner, in a masterful reading of Warhol's paintings and prints made from a photo-essay by Charles Moore initially published in *Life*, makes the case for Warhol as a history painter.<sup>55</sup>

Warhol's *Race Riot* is emblematic of the connection between archive and trauma,<sup>56</sup> what Wagner calls the "registration of the glamour and redundancy and immanent violence of American life under late capitalism."<sup>57</sup> But the trauma explicated in *Race Riot* is of a different order than that found in the

Andy Warhol, *Mechanical* ("The Dogs' Attack is Negroes' Reward," from *Life* magazine, May 17, 1963), 1963

Newsprint clipping, graphite, tape, and gouache on heavyweight paper

20 x 22 1/2 in. (50.8 x 57.2 cm)

The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. Founding Collection, Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

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luridly sensationalist images of the *Saturday Disasters* series.<sup>58</sup> The latter embody a kind of popular grotesque, a fascination with a cartoonish kind of horror in which the victims—smashed against windshields, trapped in burning cars, impaled on electrical poles on dark American highways and suburban streets—become fodder for the entertainment industry. Revisiting traumatic violence in this way, the scenes of death and their various archival returns become part of everyday spectacle. “The result,” Wagner observes, “is images caught between modes of representation: stranded somewhere between allegory and history.”<sup>59</sup>

If *Race Riot* allegorizes a peculiarly mid-century American crisis, such a crisis constitutes the sociological ground for the glossary of images in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Death by Gun)* (1990), an index of grainy black-and-white photographs of 464 people who died from gunshots during a one-week period, from May 1 to May 7, 1989, across the cities of America.<sup>60</sup> Like all of the artist's stacked offset pieces, *Untitled* consists of several hundred sheets of printed paper endlessly available for viewers to take away and endlessly replenished to maintain an ideal height. The work's somber content—images of the dead stare back at the viewer, with numbing silence—transforms its structure from archival printed sheet to sculptural monument. The allusive character of this extraordinary but deceptive work operates at the level of two kinds of archival practice. First, it embodies Foucault's idea of the document turned into a monument, here subtly transformed from mere representation to a kind of altarpiece. One can also argue that the second effect of the work, as a literal archive, is a reversal of the first, and therefore *Untitled* oscillates between document and monument, shifting from the archival to the monumental and from that to the documentary. In this collation of obituaries, a wound is exposed as the sign of a shocking collective trauma; the seeming randomness of relationships between victims coalesces into a unity through the time frame of their deaths. This running tally illuminates the images within the reportorial or documentary boundary specific to the account of each victim. The photographs are organized on the white sheet of paper in no apparent order or hierarchical arrangement, without regard for race, gender, class, age, or circumstance of death (suicides and homicides). The democracy of death is spotlighted here, irrespective of victim.

Like Warhol, Gonzalez-Torres addresses a peculiarly American issue. Yet this work differs from Warhol's in a crucial respect. If *Race Riot* represents the monumentalization of the document as *history painting*, Gonzalez-Torres's archive of random deaths memorializes the victims. It is a token of remembrance and a work of mourning.

Ilán Lieberman also enlists the archive as a form of commemoration in *Niño Perdido* (2006–7), a series of drawings based on photographs of missing children whose disappearances were reported in local Mexican newspapers. Alternating between document and monument, information and photography, *Niño Perdido* functions as a kind of pre-obituary for the lost who may never be found. Lieberman's use of newspaper photographs of the missing children alerts us to the wide-ranging deployment of the photographic portrait as an index of memory, as an image of identification and

sometimes disidentification. In each carefully drawn image, he has painstakingly recreated the exact pictorial format of the original newspaper image, as if also creating a memorial to the lost child.

It is difficult to come to terms, artistically, with the events of September 11, 2001. The destruction of the World Trade Towers in Lower Manhattan instantly transformed the site into a memorial and monument; Ground Zero became a shrine and a sacred ground. To broach the event that spawned so many iconic images is to touch a living wound, to experience the vividness with which its memory still reverberates around the world. The breaching of the two towers by the force of the exploding planes created an indelible iconography of the massive structures burning and collapsing. The images were instantly broadcast across the world, with numbing repetition, on television and the Internet, in newspapers and magazines, and continue to be replayed every anniversary. The traumatic images became archival the instant the first footage surfaced and the need for documentary accounts grew. September 11 created a new *iconomy*,<sup>61</sup> a vast economy of the iconic linking archive to traumatic public memory. As the circulation of these images continues unabated, it is fair to ask what their status is beyond their initial documentary purpose as evidence of two incomprehensible acts of violence. Have the images become emblematic more of the aftermath than of the event itself? How does one revisit, not the event itself, but its aftermath, its mediatized manifestation? For many, to say more with images of September 11 is already to say too much, to lapse into cheap vulgarity.

These are questions we must grapple with in Hans-Peter Feldmann's new project, *9/12 Front Page* (2001), an installation (presented here for the first time) documenting the media response to September 11 through a collection (an archive) of some 100 front pages of European and other international newspapers published on September 12, 2001, a day after the horrors unfolded. Does seeing the events from distant shores change its fundamental impact or its political and collective meaning in America? And what about showing these front pages in the very city where the carnage happened, seven years after the fact? This is Feldmann's provocation.

Feldmann abandoned painting in the late 1960s to focus exclusively on the photographic medium. Since then, he has been concerned, first, with photography's social and political meaning in the context of public culture, and second, with the disjuncture between the ubiquity of the photographic image as it developed a private cult of commemoration, and the evacuation of meaning that ensued as photographic images became empty signs. Mixing the high and low, private and public, the artful and kitsch, Feldmann's seemingly offhanded, anti-aesthetic, "anti-photographic"<sup>62</sup> approach is undermined by the gravity of the subjects he engages—such as in *Die Toten, 1967–1993* (1998), a work dealing with images of terrorism in Germany—and the systematic, regulated format in which he recalibrates his collected or produced photographic images into new structures of interpretation. *9/12 Front Page*, like *Die Toten*, compels a different register of ethical and political disclosures. Do the fluttering sheets of newspaper illuminate the dark events of September 11, or do they banalize and ultimately diminish their projected impact? Is September 11 principally a media event for the global pub-



Hans-Peter Feldmann, *Die Toten*, 1967–93, 1998  
 90 works  
 Dimensions variable  
 Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York  
 © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York /  
 VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

lic? With no accompanying commentary, this material collected from different media sources, in different nations, cities, and languages, implicitly asks the viewer whether it can be treated as a work of art or merely a kind of public testimony. As a work concerned with public memory and media imagination, *9/12 Front Page* addresses the intersection of iconographic shock and spectacle—such as Zapruder’s footage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy; it also explores the terms around which photography mediates history and document, event and image. Or how media intervene into the archive and public memory. Buchloh’s formulation of the “anomic archive,” exemplified by Richter’s *Atlas*, versus the utopian project of photomontagists of the later

1920s is relevant here: “the organizational and distributional form will now become the archive . . .”<sup>63</sup> This aspect of Feldmann’s practice, in which images and their contexts are constantly shuffled and represented in new forms of reception—in book works, newsprint editions, bound photocopied files—is developed from the understanding that, far from the experience of anomie, “the photographic image in general was now defined as dynamic, contextual, and contingent, and the serial structuring of visual information implicit within it emphasized open form and a potential infinity, not only of photographic subjects eligible in a new social collective but, equally, of contingent, photographically recordable details and facets that would constitute each individual subject within perpetually changing altered activities, social relationships, and object relationships.”<sup>64</sup>

Modes of artistic reception have engendered and mobilized discursive spaces in which spectators play a signal role in interpellating the work of the archive into highly structured forms of witnessing. One of *Archive Fever*’s premises is that, while the status of the archive today may not be ambiguous, its role in the historical determination of public memory remains unsettled by mnemonic ambivalence. The fascination with the archive as a facet of public memory has retained its power over a wide range of artists who continue to deploy archival images of media as reflexive and documentary responses to events. In Christian Boltanski’s meditation on mourning and loss, the powers of the archive as a fundamental site through which we remember remain undiminished, even if the images he deploys and the narratives that he constitutes are more allusive and evocative of an archive than that they represent an actual existing archive. For nearly forty years, Boltanski has posed conceptual and philosophical questions about the stability of the archive as a means by which we come to know and understand the past, not so much as a way to enter the logic of remembering but to explore and expose how photographic images trouble remembering, and in their inconsistency perforate the membrane of private

and public memory. In the diverse arrangements to which their assemblage is subjected, Boltanski often treats photographic documents in contradictory ways: sometimes they are collected in a linear structure forming a seemingly coherent narrative, or they may be transformed into fetishized, individuated units on which a dim spotlight is fixed, lending them an almost devotional character, in a panoply of sentimental configurations that, remarkably, are designed to evoke shrines.

Boltanski's work oscillates between inert collections and arrangements of conservation, sometimes pushing his concerns to perverse extremes, blurring the line between the fictive and the historical. In a series of works titled *Detective*, he draws from a popular French magazine of the same name that details a world of infamy in which crime is vicariously experienced through the spectacle of media



Christian Boltanski, *Archive Dead Swiss*, 1990  
Photographs, lamps, white linen, wooden shelves  
128 x 110 1/2 x 22 1/2 in. (325.1 x 280.7 x 57.2 cm)  
Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York  
© 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York /  
ADAGP, Paris

excess. *Detective* appropriates the norms of the photographic montage, a mode in which devices such as juxtaposition and decontextualization interrupt the regularized flow of pictorial narrative but which also privilege a democracy of relationships over the specificity of the sign. Here, the collectivized arrangements take precedence over the singular and unique. The sequence of images, collated from a variety of sources (sometimes the same images are reused in other ways, thus calling attention to issues of their authenticity as historical documents), suggests such relationships, but while the “Spectators of the work know that these photographs are images of individuals involved in crime and murder, . . . [they] have no way of distinguishing between criminals and victims.”<sup>65</sup> In *Lessons of Darkness: Archives: Detective* (1987), dealing with crime, or *Archive Dead Swiss* (1990), which alludes to the Holocaust, the configuration of the images and their dilated, soft-focus pictorialism produce an unsettling ambiguity. Again, the general takes precedence over the specific.<sup>66</sup> The darkness of the Holocaust, for instance, is treated through the structural mechanism by which we come to experience the transformation of private images—snapshots of men, women, children hovering between disappearance and recall—into powerful, monumental, linear arrangements that become meditations on public memory. The collectivized archive becomes a mnemonic reflection on history, building on the anonymity of individual lives to illuminate a kind of generalized singularity, but one nonetheless subordinated to the discourse of a group, a community. Given Boltanski’s propensity to mix the fictional and the documentary, however, it is impossible to tell whether in this gallery of individual lives the images are genuine historical documents or merely images that stand in for such individuals. This



is the essence of Boltanski’s ambivalence, for one never knows what is properly historical or semantically archival.

Artistic assessments of photographic and media documents have contributed to reconsiderations of archival artifacts as evidence connected to broader inquiries into the theme of public memory. These inquiries have in turn inspired critical appraisals by contemporary artists of the genealogy and history of archival practices. As the fascination

Photographer unknown, [Corpse of mother at Bergen-Belsen], April 17, 1945  
IWM negative #BU 4027

Printed with the permission of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London

with the images of the Abu Ghraib scandal shows, there are philosophical and political interests at work. However, there is a more profound antagonism toward the status of such images in venues of art. While the Abu Ghraib images have served an instrumental purpose in a public controversy, as a counter-archive to bureaucratically generated amnesia about the Iraq War, torture, and abuse, artistic interventions can activate more complex reflections on the relationship between the photographic document and historical consciousness. Archives represent scenes of unbearable historical weight and therefore open up a productive space for artists in the form of aesthetic, ethical, political, social, and cultural speculation.

We need to reckon with, then, the difference between a purely semantic reading of the archive and its properly situated historical present.<sup>67</sup> Consider two photographic images, placed side by side. One is a documentary photograph shot on April 17, 1945, toward the end of World War II, in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp by a member of the British Army's Film and Photographic Unit. It shows the splayed, emaciated body of a young mother partially covered around the chest by a torn blanket, her eyes fixed in the contortions of death. This photograph and many other documentations of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen provide vivid accounts of unimaginable horror.<sup>68</sup> One reason these images have remained "the most influential of any record or artefact documenting the Nazi concentration camps," as Toby Haggith argues, is that they "are some of the most grotesque and disturbing."<sup>69</sup> Their wide public dissemination heightened their impact and no doubt contributed to the fascination with their iconography.

The image offered for comparison, *Untitled* (1987), a silkscreen version of the Bergen-Belsen photograph, is by Robert Morris.<sup>70</sup> Like Warhol's use of Charles Moore's photographs of the Civil Rights march in Birmingham, Alabama, Morris explicitly references a historical event. *Untitled* is part of a body of work in which he reconsiders images associated with World War II, such as the Holocaust or the firebombing of German cities like Dresden, a subject recorded by photographers and writers.<sup>71</sup> Morris (again like Warhol) made some alterations to the original Bergen-Belsen image: it has been cropped, so as to fill the frame in a looming, projective fashion; treated with encaustic; and splashed—with almost expressionistic verve—with a blue-purple selenium tint that gives it the jarring, discordant appearance of an Old Master print. Further interventions include an elaborately carved frame, fabricated from a material called Hydrocal used by Morris in the 1980s in a "'baroque' phase of firestorm and holocaust paintings."<sup>72</sup> Close inspection of the carved frame reveals fragments of human body parts and objects, suggesting a reliquary.

What was Morris attempting to convey through the juxtaposition of the transformed photograph and the sculpturelike frame? Does this decontextualization forty years after the event enhance our understanding of that event? Or does it rupture linear mnemonic continuity, a straight line to that site in which the body of the young mother was photographed? Projected back into historical consciousness through the daring reconstitution of a documentary photograph, Morris's work derives its power



Eyal Sivan, *The Specialist: Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 1999  
Video, color, in English, Hebrew, German, and French with  
English subtitles, 128 min.

Courtesy the artist

not merely from its subject—Nazi barbarity—but in the way it establishes a heightened sense of ambivalence in an image that is an almost sacred manifestation of archival specificity. What frustrates the reading of Morris's work is not its deliberate aesthetic recomposition and decontextualization but the insistent location of the image within its historically troubled context. Morris does not directly engage Bergen-Belsen but, rather, its archive. Does his engagement with this image owe to a broader enchantment with atrocity, or to the disputed claim made by Norman Finkelstein that images of the atrocity have been manipulated as part of a process he calls the Holocaust industry?<sup>73</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell's illuminating reading

moves Morris's meditation on atrocity far from Finkelstein's critique by spelling out the temporal relationship between frame and image: the "hydrocal frames with their imprinted body parts and post-holocaust detritus stand as the framing 'present' of the works, trophies or relics encrusted around the past event, the catastrophe that left the fossils as the imprints in which it is enframed. Frame is to image as body is to the destructive element, as present is to past."<sup>74</sup>

Nazi atrocity is also the subject of Eyal Sivan's film *The Specialist: Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1999), comprised entirely of footage shot during the 1961 trial in Jerusalem of the notorious Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann, who coordinated the efficient deportation of Jews on a mass scale to various death camps during the war.<sup>75</sup> Sivan's film establishes a distance from the traumatic emotional responses that images of the Holocaust usually elicit, particularly among survivors. It focuses instead on the ordinariness of perpetrators like Eichmann, whose very innocuousness would lead the philosopher Hannah Arendt to coin the memorable phrase "the banality of evil."<sup>76</sup> In a review of the film, Gal Raz notes that "Sivan uses cinematic-linguistic tactics of deconstruction and reconstruction to give Arendt's claims a filmic articulation."<sup>77</sup> Wielding the sharp knife of deconstruction, Sivan restructures the chronology of the trial, presenting it out of sequence and thus denying the logic of archival linearity and narrative continuity. The filmmaker's reshaping of the event through a series of editing choices lends drama to the otherwise laborious process of a judicial proceeding. According to Raz, *The Specialist* is an intervention not only into the archive itself but also into the historical process of the trial, such that the "distorted chronology occurs not only at the level of entire scenes but also on the editorial scale within the scene[s]."<sup>78</sup> The struggle between prosecutor and defendant—the court, survivors, and the State of Israel pitted against Eichmann and the entire Nazi death apparatus—viti-

ates any insight into the horror of the camps. In fact, in the dramatic turns of the trial, the horror becomes muted, even secondary, as all attention is fixed on Eichmann the beast, the war criminal and Jew hater. Viewers become immersed in the sparring, punctuated by gripping climaxes, between accused and accusers as they confront each other with accusations and denials of responsibility. The footage of the trial conveys the obverse of evil incarnate, posing instead the question of whether the Holocaust is representable without humanizing the perpetrators. On this question, Sivan, like Arendt, who concluded that Eichmann was a common criminal rather than an antisemite, has been condemned for minimizing the testimony of witnesses through his editorial decontextualization.<sup>79</sup>

At issue here is how the works of Sivan and Morris offend the categorical power of the archive as the principal insight into a truth. To refute the singular authority of the archive is also ostensibly to diminish the trauma that it represents. Morris deploys an image that for many shocks and wounds memory; Sivan interrogates the moral certainty of a judicial trial that connects the defendant to the atrocities from which Morris's image stems. Morris's decontextualization of the Bergen-Belsen image and Sivan's out-of-sequence chronology of the Eichmann trial fracture the concordance of archival truth to historical event and the sensational account which documentary photography gives it in relationship to memory. Morris's modified image, drawn from the archival index of horror, suggests a self-conscious ambiguity, if only to expose the archive's muteness, its social incommunicability as the rational voice of truth. Showing the prostrate figure of the woman lying in a field of what appears to be an aqueous liquid, as if recently exhumed or in the process of submersion, seems also to be a critical device for challenging contemporary culture's attentiveness to historical events; or, rather, contemporary art's active interpellation of history and document as a way of working through the difficult zone between trauma and memory. Morris and Sivan's separate interventions are jarring because they seek to examine this troubled zone, along with the power that archives exert on public memory.

Both projects draw from that vast *iconomy* of images to which the archive belongs. So thoroughly has the archive been domesticated that it has come to serve as a shorthand for memory; whether its images are lifted from newspapers and magazines or downloaded from digital cameras, it presses upon its users and viewers new kinds of ethical, social, political, and cultural relationships to information, history, and memory. Memories of the Holocaust have been passed down to us in a steady stream of testimonies, rituals of witnessing, narratives, films, museums, etc., but the principal knowledge of it, at least for the general public, has been largely visual. Here photographs serve as more than *representations* of the catastrophe; they have come to be seen as unmediated *evidence* of it.<sup>80</sup> All these considerations are part of the activity of artists insofar as the archival impulse has become a commonplace in contemporary art. The fascination with the archive, the inimitable madness of the archive, the constant return to it for verification, inspiration, and source, suggest not only a profound interest in the nature of the archival form found in photography and film but art's relationship to historical reflections on the past.

This exhibition is manifestly a conversation about such reflections. But it also articulates a kind of *punctum* in that reflection, between generations and genealogies of images, between modes of address and methods. It shows the diverse approaches, the traversed historical grounds, in which to reconsider the status of the archive. Fazal Sheikh's photographs from the series *The Victor Weeps: Afghanistan* (1998) push the archive toward an incommensurable zone of unbearable loss. Yet it remains a site of vigilance, and of defiance of the events that threaten to swallow up the individual's memories of loved ones, who seem to have been irretrievably lost but must be constantly remembered as emblems of injustice, nobility, and martyrdom. Against the edicts of forgetting, Sheikh's photographs of hands holding tiny passport images of lost or dead family members hover in the gray zone between remembrance and commemoration. The hands extend to the viewer images of sons and brothers, those who—the captions tell us, based on the testimony of their beloved—have been martyred. The hands reach out, as if to touch us with a searing memory, in gestures of affection that are nonetheless marked by the daunting affliction of death.<sup>81</sup>

Pushed in other directions, the archival form can become a temporal mechanism for enacting historical events, even—as this exhibition demonstrates—a vehicle for reconstituting history as self-conscious fiction. Such is the case of Walid Raad and The Atlas Group, whose ongoing inquiry into Lebanon's civil war of the 1970s to 1990s is a work of deep perplexity, wounding humor, and fantastic invention. While the Lebanese civil war may have been real, its history is a minefield of interpretation, subjected to constant manipulation by ideological and sectarian forces. Rather than draw us into an official documentary account, whose ultimate hermeneutic value will in any case be disputed by different factions, Raad / The Atlas Group direct us to the contradictions in the historical record and the methods that serve its varied accounts. Borrowing the conventions of the historical novel, the Atlas Group Archive deploys fictional characters—historians, interpreters, witnesses, and archivists—whose investigations and commentary illuminate the disputed terrain of the war's recollections. The *Fadl Fakhouri File*,<sup>82</sup> for instance, consists of 225 notebooks and other “evidence” compiled by the wholly imaginary Lebanese historian Dr. Fakhouri of the thousands of car bombs detonated in Beirut during the war; Fakhouri's notebooks were “donated” to the Atlas Group Archive upon his death in 1993. *We can make rain, but no one came to ask* (2008), included in this exhibition, represents a turn toward abstraction as a strategy. Here the nearly illegible written “evidence” culled from a fictive car-bombing investigation floats in a sea of white topped by horizontal bands of enigmatic image fragments.

Lamia Joreige explores the impact of the same war on Lebanese memories in her video *Objects of War* (1999–2006). Rather than focus on images from photo albums, Joreige instead asked each of her subjects to select an object that represents for him or her a memory of the war and to speak about its importance. For one subject, the representative object is an old group photograph, for another a drawing of a house plan, for yet another a large blue plastic vessel. The objects trigger a deep archival

retrieval. Joreige's method elicits very personal testimonies that operate at the level of object relations and, while manifestly political, reveal a layer of lived experience that confounds official accounts of the war's history.

### ***Homo Sovieticus: Postcommunist Archives***

Archival returns are often conjoined with the struggle against amnesia and anomie. A heightened sense of urgency surrounds the demand to remember and commemorate in societies where social codes of communication have been historically unstable or preempted by state repression. Such conditions can produce tendencies to the excessive collectivization of memory, exercises in mass melancholy, and, when liberated from these conditions, attempts to recapture orders of normality that predate the shock of historical rupture and the loss of access to the archive. Diaries are published, formerly prohibited images emerge from the cellar, dissident films surface, testimonies of victims are heroically recast, attics are rummaged, boxes unburied. All these rituals of archival retrieval and performance have been a prominent feature of Eastern European societies since the fall of communism. In the former East Germany, for instance, the opening of the vast archives of the Stasi, the state secret police, precipitated a prolonged period of melancholic reflection and bitter controversy. In Poland, the right-wing government led by the Kaczyński brothers has taken a sinister, pseudo-legal approach to the past through the so-called law of lustration, an attempt to purge Poland's historical memory and political landscape of the taint of communist collaboration as well as undermine the moral position of the Kaczyńskis' political adversaries. Even Lech Walesa, former president of Poland and leader of Solidarity during the dissident rebellions of the late 1970s, has come under suspicion as a collaborator. These official attacks, in which the archive is perversely activated as a tool of *dis*remembering in the service of official paranoia, constitute archival fascism. This is the exact opposite of the projects of Anri Sala, Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica, and Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas, all of which deal with the collapse of the communist imperium and the archival legacy of that seismic break with the past.

Anri Sala's video *Intervista* (1998) begins like a detective story. Several years after the end of communism, Sala, a young Albanian art student studying in Paris, returns to Tirana to visit his parents. In their home, he finds an unprocessed 16mm film in plastic wrapping. The film dates to the communist era but neither of his parents can recall its contents or the circumstances of its making. With no access to a film projector, Sala examines the negative by hand and discovers images of his mother at about the age of thirty. His curiosity piqued, he takes the film back to Paris and proceeds to restore it. To his surprise, he discovers footage of his mother meeting Enver Hoxa, Albania's communist leader whose distrust of the West led him to literally seal the country off from the rest of the world. Even more startling is a scene of his mother delivering a speech to a Communist Party congress held in Albania in the

1970s. The speech, and the audience applause, are inaudible, as the film's sound reel is missing.

Will this fortuitous discovery unlock the secret of Albania's communist past for the artist? Determined to reconnect the visual archive to its proper temporal context, Sala employs lip readers from an Albanian school for the deaf to decipher his mother's speech and therefore provide the film with a more complete narrative, and implicitly its testimony. Once this is accomplished, he splices together the multiple frames of the original footage with subtitles. The reconstituted footage is then supplemented with videotaped conversations between Sala and his mother. This recursive interaction stages *Intervista* as an archive existing alongside a running commentary on its status as a historical object. The resulting video alternates between the black-and-white archival footage and the color video interviews, a shifting of temporal and historical positions between the communist past and the politically ambiguous present, between self and other, artist and mother, filmic image and its historical meaning. On another level, the back-and-forth also occurs between conditions of archival production and historical reception, between muteness and language, between image and memory. These relays and contextual changes impose a heavy burden on Sala's task as a filmmaker, who is now compelled to shift from the private world of familial affection to the arena of public confession. Is the mother to be judged as a collaborationist or a patriot? Can an intervention into the historical past such as Sala's video adequately convey the complexity of the political, social, and ideological pressures that young men and women of his mother's generation endured in a closed system?

These questions give the archive a new kind of interpretive structure, as the place to examine accounts of collective memory, one taken up in a more archaeological fashion by the Lithuanian artists Nomedas and Gediminas Urbonas. In their multipart work *Transaction* (2002), the film archive frames an interrogation of the very conditions inherent in the reception of Soviet ideology and the subordination of what was deemed "Lithuanianess." The project began with an examination of more than fifty Lithuanian films made between 1947 and 1997, during the period of Soviet control of the cinematic apparatus. The artists explain:

Most of these films were produced in the ideological currents belonging to the Soviet period. Lenin's slogan on cinema as "of utmost importance of all the arts" was furthered by Stalin's statement: "cinema is illusion, although it dictates the life of its own laws." Having lived in a single-ideology-based mass culture that scripted the space of the *homo Sovieticus*, there is the question today as to what could have been "authentic," from product to state-of-being.<sup>83</sup>

To read this transaction, as it were, a number of interlocutors—in this case, Lithuanian feminist intellectuals—were employed by the artists to, on the one hand, deconstruct the patriarchal structure of communist society and, on the other, explore the purported "authenticity" of the Lithuanian feminine

voice. Moving back and forth between the old film archives and their translation into the present, the artists point to a conundrum of the Soviet legacy and contemporary Lithuanian ambivalence that must remain a vital aspect of the assessment of the films, both as a means of excavating the communist past and of building a post-Soviet, postcommunist national allegory. This dialectic directs our attention to the fact that, although communism has disappeared from the political culture of Lithuania, its social and cultural repercussions remain.

In a 1970 recording, avant-garde African American musician and poet Gil Scott-Heron proclaimed: "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised."<sup>84</sup> Released at the height of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, and the radical political projects of American countercultures, the recording represented one of the most astute critiques and dissections of the media spectacle in relation to radical expressions of political subjectivity. Twenty years later, the filmmakers Harun Farocki and Andrea Ujica stood that formulation on its head. *Videograms of a Revolution* (1993) not only refutes conventional models of media critique and theories of spectacle, it exploits the techniques of spectacle as a tool with which to construct and view history.

*Videograms* is a montage drawn from 125 hours of amateur and professional archival video footage shot during the ten days of the Romanian Revolution. At a pivotal moment in the uprising, captured on camera and included in *Videograms*, the gathered revolutionaries declared: "We are victorious! The TV is with us." And so it was. As the film oscillates between television anchors reporting the shifting and indeterminate events, and sweeping views of crowds marching through the streets and battling security forces, it appears that the revolution is literally broadcast live, with every Romanian a participant in the spectacle. The result is a film that harks back to Sergei Eisenstein's *October* (1927). *Videograms* is structured with the same methods of editing and montage used by Eisenstein to transform the events of the 1917 Russian Revolution into a film that expresses the subjectivity of popular sentiment. Intercutting professional footage, television studio broadcasts, and raw data recorded by amateurs camped out on the streets, Farocki and Ujica use the archive to rework the relationship between power and popular forms of representation in a mode that moves beyond spectacle and instead utilizes the expressive instruments of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque,<sup>85</sup> elaborating forms of theatrical heteroglossia, the grotesque, critical dialogism. Fusing all of these modes of multiple voicing and subject position, Farocki and Ujica offer a penetrating insight into the televised revolution as an example of intertextual filmmaking.

### **The Ethnographic Conditions of the Archive**

The assumption that archival forms have specific mnemonic functions and hold a key to the door of historical experience also pertains to what may be designated as the archive's ethnographic condi-

tion. Be it the scripted spaces of *homo Sovieticus* or the drive toward the amassment of snapshots, domestic photography allows us to see the archive as a site where society and its habits are given shape. Archives constitute an economy of production, exchange, and transmission of images. Or, as Terry Smith's neologism describes it, an *iconomy*. This economy of icons, images, and signs exists in a murky sensorium, blanketing the social and cultural landscape. The archive today rests in a state of historical incarceration, played out in media experiences, museums of art, natural history, and ethnography, in old libraries,<sup>86</sup> in memorabilia concessions, as popular entertainment, in historical reenactments, as monuments and memorials, in private albums, on computer hard drives. This field of production might be described, in the manner of Pierre Bourdieu, as a cultural habitus,<sup>87</sup> an ethnographic condition. Under this condition, artists enact the archival fantasy as well as the archontic<sup>88</sup> function of the historian, translator, curator, pedagogue. These functions also include the compulsive hoardings and accumulations that defy the temporal legibility around which certain archival projects, such as that of Jef Geys, are organized. Derrida's designation for this ethnographic condition is *archive fever*. It is from this sense of the feverish, maddening attention to the archive that this exhibition derives its operating set of idioms.

The projects of Zoe Leonard, Lorna Simpson, Sherrie Levine, Vivian Sundaram, Glenn Ligon, Thomas Ruff, and Tacita Dean operate around the conditions of visual ethnography, especially as each of the works formulates a temporal and iconographic assessment of the archival past. Each of these projects is concerned with the status of images as materials of cultural transaction and exchange. Tacita Dean's *Floh* (2000)<sup>89</sup> lends ethnographic insight into the production of domestic photography. Accumulated over a period of seven years from secondhand bins in flea markets across Europe and the United States, the 163 images that comprise *Floh* can be generally categorized as amateur rather than professional photography. They are consistent with types of images common to most domestic photographic production: portraits of individuals and groups (some quasi-institutional), pictures of objects, vacation shots, snapshots of pets or family. They are what Mark Godfrey calls "species of found photography."<sup>90</sup> However, though "found" in the conventional sense, these images were carefully selected and resourced for the specificity of their cultural meanings, as much as for their typological differentiations between image species. Though the line between amateur and "fine art" photography is indeed blurred, the so-called de-skilling of the photographic in contemporary art is not at issue here;<sup>91</sup> the concerns of this accumulated cache are fundamentally cultural, and specifically ethnographic in nature. Wielding a sophisticated curatorial acumen, Dean uses *Floh* to demonstrate the logic of the "artist as ethnographer."<sup>92</sup>

Thomas Ruff belongs to that small group of German artists whose systematic rethinking of the photographic image emerged from the master classes of Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Düsseldorf Academy beginning in the late 1970s; the other members of this group are Candida Höfer, Andreas Gursky, and Thomas Struth. Since the mid-1980s, these artists have devoted their practice to explor-

ing new formats for conceptual approaches to image making, in a kind of renewal of the Neue Sachlichkeit principles of objective observation developed in Germany in the 1920s by photographers ranging from August Sander to Albert Renger-Patzsch. The idea of direct, unmediated recording of objects was given a serial, conceptual rigor in the Bechers' photographs of flat, unmodulated images of industrial structures on the verge of obsolescence. To this aesthetic Ruff's generation responded with images that, despite their variety, combine a dry, reductive documentary sensibility and ethnographic subject matter. Of the Bechers' former students, all of whom have developed their own critical language, Ruff's approach to photography is the most heterogeneous. Recently, his concerns have shifted to photography's socially embedded contexts, in other words, to the archival aggregates in which formats of photography have been organized, such as picture files drawn from Internet pornographic sites from which Ruff produced his *Nudes* series.

*Machines* (2003) continues Ruff's interest in investigating the cultural values, and the corresponding aesthetic and social meanings, embedded in the archive. Like Dean's *Floh*, gathered from the detritus of the photographic economy, Ruff's *Machines* are "found" images, obtained by acquiring the photographic archives of Rohde und Dörrenberg, a defunct machine and tool company that operated in Düsseldorf-Oberkassel.<sup>93</sup> While Dean leaves her images largely in the state in which they are found, Ruff intervenes in the archive, making clear its status as an object of ethnographic and anthropological interest, as well as endowing it with epistemological and aesthetic functions. By scanning, cropping, coloring, enlarging, and generating significantly larger prints than were initially produced for the brochure of the company's product line, Ruff invests the machines with a totemic presence. Writing about this body of work, Caroline Flosdorff observes that "the context in which Ruff's photographs are now shown is no longer bound to a particular objective (product photography, advertising photography) . . ." <sup>94</sup> This shift in context, from product brochure to art photography, is rife with ambivalence: having turned the machines into decontextualized pictorial objects, Ruff enhances their photographic presence. The machines lose all specificity as objects of ethnographic fascination. They have become iconic markers of industrial fetishization. Although his reading of the images deviates from the dry, direct, and seemingly unmediated subjectivity of the Bechers' work, it is in this juncture between decontextualization and fetishization that Ruff's *Machines* most resemble his teachers' blast furnaces, grain silos, and mine shafts, as they provide a glimpse into a distant industrial past.

Lorna Simpson's layered works encompass the archaeological, the archival, and the forensic. The language of her pictorial analysis always seems to play out in the interstices of the historical and psychic constitution of the black subject. As such, the theoretical and conceptual horizon of her complex examination of race and identity takes on two concomitant structures of archivization: on the one hand, the manner in which the body of the black subject is culturally marked through the process of what Frantz Fanon terms epidermalization,<sup>95</sup> the idea that race is literally inscribed on the skin; and, on the other hand, the way such marking is reproduced and documented in social and cultural practices

such as the cinema, art, and literature. Moreover, Simpson's practice often rigorously specifies the importance of a Foucauldian archaeology of knowledge as a means through which the archival relationship between the black subject and American culture is shorn of sentimentality, and instead revealed as a source for understanding the codes of the racialized image in popular culture. Working sometimes under the auspices of the artist as ethnographer, her concerns are informed by an analysis of the archival remains of what Toni Morrison describes as American Africanism,<sup>96</sup> that is, the relationship between race and identity in historical representations of blackness in American high art and popular entertainment.<sup>97</sup>

The photographic works included here—*Untitled (guess who's coming to dinner)* (2001) and *Study* (2002)—are embedded in this landscape generated from popular depictions and, as Simpson would insist, the misperceptions proper to the discourse of misrepresentations that produce stereotypes of black subjects. In both works, Simpson adopts the photographic studio as the place to construct what will turn out to be an archival realignment, one describing the gulf between the portrayed black subjects—a woman in *Untitled* and a man in *Study*, each photographed in a profile style reminiscent of nineteenth-century portraits—and the scenes of representation found in American films and art. *Untitled* undertakes this structural repositioning by way of aligning the forty-three oval portraits in vertical rows underneath semitransparent Plexiglas. Incised on the left and right sides of the Plexiglas surface are titles of American films produced from the turn of the twentieth century to the late 1960s. The same strategy obtains in *Study*, but here the titles are taken from paintings in which the black male figures as subject or object—underscored by such titles as *Study of a Black Man*, *A Negro Prince*, *African Youth*. Each of the documented paintings is to be found in the collection of an American museum. In this body of work, Simpson takes a counter-ethnographic approach as a way of entering the archive of the American imagination. Similarly, she has recently turned to the thriving online economy of ebay auctions, where she has been researching and acquiring institutional films produced during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In *Jackie* (2007), she uses footage from one such film—a three-minute interval in which a teacher instructs a young white boy to draw on a piece of paper—to address the invisible ways in which mental health institutions retrain certain segments of the American population.

The ethnographic conditions of the archive, especially one dependent on the language of appropriation, have consistently animated the critical paradigm of a range of postconceptual photographic practices. Appropriation was at the forefront of the postmodernist dialectic in contemporary art that sought to obliterate the space between an original and its copy. In so doing, it called into question the relevance of the modernist category of the author, the author being, in its etymological sense, the source of authority, of certainty. Archives, as I have indicated, are likewise dependent on the function of their manifest authority as the principal source of historical truth. Glenn Ligon's biting critique of Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photographs of black men in *The Black Book* resides in this gap

between authorship and authority, original and copy. In *Notes on the Margin of the Black Book* (1991–93), Ligon engages in a concerted deconstruction of Mapplethorpe's objectification of the black male body as a signal source of sexual stereotyping by using a series of textual commentaries drawn from theorists and commentators such as James Baldwin, Isaac Julien, Kobena Mercer, Richard Dyer, Essex Hemphill, and Frantz Fanon. Positioned in double rows beneath the images, the text panels describe the contested ground of this complex issue. Originally, the relationship of white enjoyment to debasement of black male sexuality was not Ligon's only concern in this work. He was equally interested in tackling the homophobic invective spewed by right-wing politicians and fundamentalist Christians, and its circumscription of gay male sexual agency.<sup>98</sup> However, over time, the troubled relationship between race and sexuality, the black male as a popular ethnographic object in American discourse, became the centerpiece of his analysis. At the same time, the problem of authorship shadows the license taken by Ligon in using Mapplethorpe's images, drawn directly from the pages of *The Black Book*. Here, conventional issues of authorship must be weighed against the archival methodologies of cultural analysis. In testing the assumption of the putative aura of Mapplethorpe's conservative brand of studio photography, the postmodern work of appropriation echoes Benjamin's explicit point to suggest that what withers is the aura of Mapplethorpe's iconography of black male sexuality.<sup>99</sup> Ligon's reading of Mapplethorpe is against the grain, setting it off-kilter, placing *The Black Book* in archival remand.

The issues surrounding postmodernist appropriation, and critiques of authorship and aura,<sup>100</sup> are central to Sherrie Levine's daring, seminal deconstructions of the modernist myths of originality<sup>101</sup> in many of her refabrications of well-known works by a gallery of male artistic eminences. Levine's *After Walker Evans* (1981) is a controversial work because its principal conceptual strategy goes beyond simple appropriation, bluntly challenging the authenticity of a work of art, the nature of authorship itself, and the sanctity of copyrighted material. It must be acknowledged that Levine's rephotographing of Walker Evans's Farm Security Administration (FSA) images was a deliberate provocation, both in its straightforward archival referencing, confounding likeness and resemblance,<sup>102</sup> and, more profoundly, in the silent power of its analysis of the somber fetishization of impoverishment. In a single cut, one is able to go from Evans's work as a set of documentary photographs, with implications<sup>103</sup> of their ethnographic content writ large, to the very nature of their treatment by Levine as so much archival artifact.

In other words, Evans may be the photographer of these works but not the singular author of the social and cultural phenomenon that engendered them. Looming over the field of representation in which the images of the tenant farmers and their families are contained is a cultural *Weltanschauung*, one which belongs to the archival memory of the American Depression of the 1930s. Given this tension between authorship and aura, and the explicit deconstruction of both in Levine's work, it is striking that Howard Singerman would make an argument for the explicit authorial and auratic character of

*After Walker Evans* as a singular work, an object to be seen, an object that can be detached from its framing referent—the work of Walker Evans. Singerman writes that Levine’s work challenges the notion of it being mere appropriation or a ghost object by maintaining a distinction: “Against what I perceived as the reduction of the work to its strategy, I wanted to insist that there was something to look at, an object, and more than that, an image that must be taken into account.”<sup>104</sup> This claim for Levine’s archival project is at odds with dominant theories that reference Benjamin, and, in my view, a unique way of reading Levine’s *After Walker Evans* under the explicit manufacture of an archival artifact.

Appropriation and parody are key devices in many uses of the archive. Here, it is important to foreground the operative logic of these projects and the ethnographic methods underlying them. Zoe Leonard’s *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (1993–96) draws from a radically different methodological process, namely through the combination of object, story, and parodic invocation of the archive as the space of lost or forgotten stories. *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* imagines the existence of such an archive of lost stories moldering in trunk boxes in damp basements. Leonard, in collaboration with filmmaker Cheryl Dunye, stages an archival ruse through scripting, casting, staging, and performing the life of an imaginary black Hollywood actress Fae Richards (née Richardson), whose accomplishments have disappeared into the pit of American cultural amnesia, no doubt because of her blackness. In the seventy-eight images that comprise this work, we follow Richards’s carefully annotated story from the earliest images of her as a teenager in Philadelphia in the early 1920s, to her heyday as a screen ingenue in the 1930s and ’40s, to the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, to the final image of her as an older woman in 1973.

Richards is accompanied by a range of other people: siblings, lovers, friends. Costume, styling, lighting, photographic mood, and the studios where the images were supposedly photographed are designed to correspond to the period being referenced, that is to say, to the archive’s specific ethnographic climate. Each image is coupled with a caption typed on a vintage typewriter; misspellings are periodically noted in the typed scripts to indicate where, for example, the typewriter skipped a line or dropped a letter. Handwritten notations add another layer of authenticity to this exacting commentary on lost history and memory. A typical caption includes a detailed annotation fleshing out the characters in the photograph. For example, in a sequence of photographs identified as 4, 42, and 43, the caption reads: “Fae Richards as photographed by Max Hetzl (Monsieur Max). 1938. Max was the in-house photographer for Silverstar Studio and also a good friend of Fae’s. Fae posed for these photographs privately, in an attempt to show H. R. Ransin, the studio head, that she could play a leading lady. The studio never allowed these photographs to be released, claiming they ‘clashed’ with the ‘Watermelon Woman’ image. Ransin offered x Miss Richards more money and a new contract to appear as a mammy in another Southern melodrama, but she refused.” The caption for images 39 and 40 reads: “Fae Richards (center), as she appeared in a screentest for the film ‘Merry-Go-Round,’ which was never completed. Under pressure from both Fae Richards and Martha Page to give

Vivan Sundaram, "Red" Indians, 2002

Gelatin silver print

15 x 20 in. (38.1 x 50.8 cm)

Courtesy SEPIA and the artist

Richards a 'leading lady' role, the character of a young vaudeville dancer was written into the screenplay. Willa Clarke (on Fae's right) was cast as Fae's dance partner and sidekick. The script went through numerous revisions and the title was changed to 'That Voodoo Magic.' Fae's part was cut back to little more than a cameo, with her dancing in several different 'jungle' costumes while Cassandra Brooke sang the title song, originally written for Fae. Fae left Silverstar Studio during filming, breaking her contract and severing all ties with Hollywood, including her relationship with Martha Page. (1938)." Period authenticity is further augmented by giving the resulting photographs a treatment of patina—intentionally aged, ripped and serrated at the corners, cracked, or sepia-toned with a hint of solarization. These strategies are intended to enhance the believability of the overall work but, contradictorily, they highlight its produced nature, not least because Leonard shows viewers the casting list of the characters.

Whereas the archive is turned into a parody of historical unity and an instrument of social identification in Leonard's work, it is leveraged elsewhere as a form of melancholic return. This is certainly the impression one derives from viewing Vivan Sundaram's images in *The Sher-Gil Archive* (1995–97),<sup>105</sup>



a work that simultaneously evokes the family album and scraps of found photographs. *The Sher-Gil Archive* details the story of Sundaram's family in turn-of-the-twentieth-century India and Europe, tracing an arc from colonialism to postcolonialism. It is both a public commemoration and an inquiry into identity and the meaning of bonds that tie family to race and nationality. The images are drawn from the rich photographic archive of the family patriarch, Umrao Singh Sher-Gil, the artist's grandfather, a Sanskrit scholar who over many years took turns at the camera photographing himself and his family. To construct this archival meditation, as well as mnemonic mediation, all the images are printed from the patriarch's negatives and photographs. Sundaram uses well-worn devices of presentation: boxes, a line of closely arranged photographs, and four lightboxes each bearing an image of a member of the Sher-Gil family, with their names etched onto the glass cover of the box. The images consist of the patriarch; the matriarch, his Hungarian wife, Marie Antoinette; and two daughters, Amrita Sher-Gil, who will become a modernist artist in Paris, and Indira Sundaram, Vivan's mother. Through these links, the archive unfolds a narrative journey of loss and desire, of the twists and turns of wandering between India and Europe, its evocation of cosmopolitan pleasure laced with ambivalence. Sundaram's work of memory is also a sly peek into the circumstances of a hybrid Indian family that allows the archive to question the issue of authenticity, especially in the manner in which the archive often serves to classify and unify concerns of disparate provenance, be it of race, ethnicity, or nationality.

Throughout this essay, we have been exploring the various conditions of the archive, particularly as it pertains to photography. Despite the degeneration of the photograph under the rapacious machines of mass media, its banalization in popular culture, and its cult of sentimentality, taken together these works probe the complex interests artists have developed, the conceptual strategies used to transform the evidentiary and documentary modes of archival materials into profound reflections on the historical condition. In his incisive reading of Richter's *Atlas*, Buchloh noted the "post-humanist and post-bourgeois subjectivity" informing the work.<sup>106</sup> This observation can be applied to the works organized under the auspices of *Archive Fever* as well. On a different level, a noticeable humanist concern drives the analyses found in individual projects. This dialectic structured by humanist and posthumanist traditions casts the whole range of archival production within an epistemological context that far exceeds the issues of taxonomies, typologies, and inventories generated by the artists. Here, "the telling of history as a sequence of events acted out by individual agents is displaced by a focus on the simultaneity of separate but contingent social frameworks and an infinity of participating agents, and the process of history is reconceived as a structural system of perpetually changing interactions and permutations between economic and ecological givens, class formations and their ideologies, and the resulting types of social and cultural interactions specific to each particular moment."<sup>107</sup> Within *Archive Fever*, the artist serves as the historic agent of memory, while the archive emerges as a place in which concerns with the past are touched by the astringent vapors of death,

destruction, and degeneration. Yet, against the tendency of contemporary forms of amnesia whereby the archive becomes a site of lost origins and memory is dispossessed, it is also within the archive that acts of remembering and regeneration occur, where a suture between the past and present is performed, in the indeterminate zone between event and image, document and monument.

December 5, 2007

- <sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 129.
- <sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).
- <sup>3</sup> Quoted in Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), p. viii.
- <sup>4</sup> See the chapter, "The Surplus Value of Images," in W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 76–106.
- <sup>5</sup> See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).
- <sup>6</sup> Increasingly, digital archives, especially from mobile phones, have become the new technology of candid camera transmission. In cases of serious events, such as the suicide terror attack in the London Underground in 2005, the first images of trapped passengers were obtained from a passenger who recorded them on his mobile phone camera. This development contains the implication of displacing the roving documentary photographer, as users respond to situations where professional journalists may not be present.
- <sup>7</sup> For a critical and extensive discussion of the photographic archive, see Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, edited by Richard Bolton (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 343–89.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.
- <sup>9</sup> For an excellent study of the history of Duchamp's *La boîte-en-valise* as an occasion to think simultaneously on the legacy of the archival form in artistic practice, its relationship to the ordering of knowledge, and the practice of self-curation, taxonomy, and the dispersal of the archival form, see T. J. Demos, *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).
- <sup>10</sup> For a fascinating exploration of the relationship between the museum and the archive, see Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993).
- <sup>11</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 130.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).
- <sup>13</sup> For discussions on the impact of Broodthaers's practice, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, ed., *Marcel Broodthaers* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988).
- <sup>14</sup> See Rosalind Krauss, "A Voyage on the North Sea": *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

- <sup>15</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*: The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (Spring 1999), p. 118.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- <sup>19</sup> Lynne Cooke, *Gerhard Richter: Atlas*, exh. brochure, Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 1995, unpag.
- <sup>20</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 127.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- <sup>22</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 5.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004), pp. 3–22.
- <sup>29</sup> See the catalogue to the remarkable exhibition *Deep Storage*, a project which traces the complex methodological processes of archiving in contemporary art: Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen, eds., *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art* (Munich: Prestel, 1998). This collection of essays provides insight into the multiplicity of epistemological, historiographical, archaeological, curatorial, and even ethnographic strategies often deployed by artists using the form of the archive to coax a miscellany of objects and images into an overarching view of cultural history. The antecedent of this form of collecting and archiving is the fifteenth-century *Wunderkammer*, a structure of archive making often credited as the origin of the museum function of collecting and display. For a penetrating theoretical and historical reflection on the questions and problems of the archive, see the essay in *Deep Storage* by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Warburg's Paragon? The End of Collage and Photomontage in Postwar Europe," pp. 50–60.
- <sup>30</sup> Today a veritable industry of publications has sprouted to analyze the intelligence, to analyze the analysis, to study the "intelligence" infrastructure. For an insider's view and a discussion of the battle between the U.N. inspectors and the U.S. administration on the case for war, see Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), a book published by the U.N. chief weapons investigator a year after the war began.
- <sup>31</sup> At the peak of the planning for the war, when President Bush needed confirmation that the evidence supporting the U.S. administration's contention that Iraq was not in compliance with a United Nations resolution prohibiting it from conducting or producing a weapons program, the director of the CIA, George Tenet, supposedly declared that the existence of evidence of Iraq's noncompliance was a "slam dunk." See Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). In his recent memoir, Tenet refutes the allegation that he made such a categorical statement concerning the Iraqi weapons program, contending that his statement was manipulated to mean something he did not actually say. See George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).
- <sup>32</sup> See, for example, Mark Danner, "The Secret Way to War," *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18034>, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18131>, and <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18180>.
- <sup>33</sup> See Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993). This is one of the most fascinating and ingenious interpretations of Victorian literature as it is preoccupied with the archival production (what Richards calls "paper shuffling") of empire in works such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay*, and Erskine Childer's *The Riddle of the Sands*.
- <sup>34</sup> Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, p. 116.
- <sup>35</sup> See Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha, 1994), pp. 329–32.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 330–31. For an official report of the intelligence work of the pundits which created the data on which the map of Tibet was subsequently put together by the British, see T. G. Montgomerie, "Report of the Trans-Himalayan Explorations Made during 1868," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 14, no. 3 (1869–70), pp. 207–14; for the most famous literary treatment of imperial information society and the archive systems it supported, see Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*.
- <sup>37</sup> Here it is important to note the turn taken from *classification*, as a method of organizing according to a system, to *classified*, as a method of wielding proprietary control over knowledge and information.
- <sup>38</sup> Richards, *The Imperial Archive*, p. 6.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- <sup>41</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 4.
- <sup>42</sup> Foster, "An Archival Impulse," p. 3.
- <sup>43</sup> See, for example, the catalogue of the exhibition *Out of Actions*: Paul Schimmel, *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1998).
- <sup>44</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 7.
- <sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the relation of the art object or image and historical time, see George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).
- <sup>46</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 7 (emphasis in original).
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> For a fuller consideration of Horsfield's method, see Carol Armstrong, "The Dilation of Attention: On the Work of Craigie Horsfield," *Artforum* (January 2004), pp. 116–21, and "The Art of Sensuous Apprehension," in *Craigie Horsfield: Relation*, edited by Catherine de Zegher (Paris: Jeu de Paume; Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian; Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006).
- <sup>49</sup> In a recent essay, the critic Nancy Princenthal makes a similar observation of the way Horsfield's work functions within what she characterizes as "Slow Time." See Nancy Princenthal, "Slow Time," *Art in America* 95 (May 2007), pp. 164–69.

- <sup>50</sup> See Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, translated by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, revised by D. J. Enright (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992).
- <sup>51</sup> Scott Watson, "Against the Habitual," in Scott Watson, Diana Thater, and Carol J. Clover, *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998), p. 46.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- <sup>53</sup> Jean-Christophe Royoux, "The Conflict of Communications," in *Stan Douglas*, edited by Christine van Assche (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1993), p. 57.
- <sup>54</sup> For an analysis connected to the Lacanian idea of trauma as the underpinning theory that prepares a critical reading of Warhol's so-called *Death in America* series, see Hal Foster, "Death in America," *October 75* (Winter 1996), pp. 37–59. See also Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
- <sup>55</sup> See Anne Wagner, "Warhol Paints History, or Race in America," *Representations* 55 (Summer 1996), pp. 98–119.
- <sup>56</sup> Foster characterizes Warhol's work as "traumatic realism." See "Return of the Real," in Hal Foster, *Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 127–68.
- <sup>57</sup> Wagner, "Warhol Paints History," p. 103.
- <sup>58</sup> See Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," *Art in America* 75 (May 1987), pp. 128–36; updated version in *Reconstructing Modernism*, edited by Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 311–32.
- <sup>59</sup> Wagner, "Warhol Paints History," p. 113.
- <sup>60</sup> The source image for *Untitled (Death by Gun)* came from a searing dramatization of the carnage exacted by gunshots in a single week reported in the pages of *Time*, July 17, 1989. Beginning with the black-and-white photograph of Evelyn Wiggins, forty-four, a mother of four killed by her husband with a shotgun after an argument in Birmingham, Alabama, ending with Steve Toomer, twenty-five, shot to death in his truck by an unknown killer, the roll call of each death was memorialized and given a rare national focus, thereby detaching these specific victims from the anonymity of daily traumatic events.
- <sup>61</sup> The term was coined by Terry Smith in *The Architecture of Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). According to Smith, the iconomy "underline[s] the central importance to human affairs of the image economy, that is, the symbolic exchanges between people, things, ideas, interest groups, and cultures that take predominantly visual form" (pp. 1–2). He goes on to construe such image economy as "more than the dense image manipulation that prevails in cultures predicated on conspicuous and incessant consumption" (p. 2).
- <sup>62</sup> Feldmann's work has been framed as issuing from an "anti-aesthetic" context based on the low character of the images he employs and the lack of fetishistic regard he accords them. Yet it is possible to observe that works like *Die Toten*—a reflection on media images, especially in newspapers and magazines, documenting the terror, murders, assassinations, and suicides in Germany initiated by radical leftist groups such as the Baader-
- Meinhof in the 1970s and early '80s—in its detailed collection of the documentation reported in the media, does not take a neutral, disinterested stance. The charged context of the events lends the images the quality of political commentary, even if Feldmann deliberately sought not to distinguish between victims and perpetrators in his arrangement of the images. The oft-stated claim that photography has lost its special character of appeal because we have become inured to the bombardment of images in the media is an oversimplification of the power of images as signs of collective public discourse. Though Feldmann's work operates within this field of skepticism, it is important to note that his interests extend from the banal and kitsch to the profoundly ethical. This is certainly the issue that must be confronted in *9/12 Front Page*.
- <sup>63</sup> Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*," p. 133.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- <sup>65</sup> Richard Hobbs, "Boltanski's Visual Archives," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998), p. 127.
- <sup>66</sup> For a detailed treatment of Boltanski's oeuvre, see Lynn Gumpert, *Christian Boltanski* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994).
- <sup>67</sup> One book that I have found especially cogent in recent discussions of the archive is a work by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, whose philosophical analysis of the Holocaust and the memories that bear on its reflection is part of an extended interpretation of the question of "Bare Life." See Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
- <sup>68</sup> For an extensive discussion of the influence of the documentary footage and photographs of Bergen-Belsen taken by the British Army's Film and Photographic Unit, see Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani, eds., *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives* (London and Portland, Ore.: Valentine Mitchell, 2006).
- <sup>69</sup> Toby Haggith, "The Filming of the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen and Its Impact on the Understanding of the Holocaust," in Bardgett and Cesarani, eds., *Belsen 1945*, p. 89.
- <sup>70</sup> My attention was drawn to this image and the work of Robert Morris by Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), although her treatment of Morris's complex interpretation of the photograph of the dead mother found in the camp proves ultimately generic.
- <sup>71</sup> For a thorough critical assessment of the psychic impact of the firebombing of German cities by Allied air forces, see W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (New York: Random House, 2003).
- <sup>72</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, "Word, Image, and Object: Wall Labels for Robert Morris," in *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 251.
- <sup>73</sup> See Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflection on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000). Finkelstein's study met with hostile reception from both liberals and conservatives.
- <sup>74</sup> Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 251.
- <sup>75</sup> Eichmann was captured in Argentina by Israeli agents. His trial in

Jerusalem ended with a sentence of death, making him the only Nazi war criminal to be executed in Israel, which had outlawed the death penalty.

<sup>76</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963). Arendt covered the trial in Jerusalem for *The New Yorker*, subsequently extending the reportage as a meditation on what we mean by evil and the aporia that the Holocaust represents as the unrepresentable, as that which cannot be fully encapsulated.

<sup>77</sup> Gal Raz, "Actuality of Banality: Eyal Sivan's *The Specialist* in Context," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2005), p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> Raz points out that some critics of *The Specialist* have accused the filmmaker of literal "fraud, forgery and falsification." On this issue she cites Hillel Tryster, the director of Steven Spielberg's Jewish Film Archive, for whom "the original footage of the trial was manipulatively edited by Sivan in a way that insults the witnesses and is unfaithful to the testimonies." *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> See Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> My thanks to Eduardo Cadava, whose brilliant lecture "Palm Reading: Fazal Sheikh's Handbook of Death," at San Francisco Art Institute, alerted me to the implications of this aspect of Sheikh's work, and ultimately led to the inclusion of these photographs in the exhibition.

<sup>82</sup> See this and other documents in the Atlas Group Archive at <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/aga.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Nomedá and Gediminas Urbonas, artist statement.

<sup>84</sup> The entire poem reads:

You will not be able to stay home, brother.  
 You will not be able to plug in, turn on and cop out.  
 You will not be able to lose yourself on skag and skip,  
 Skip out for beer during commercials,  
 Because the revolution will not be televised.

The revolution will not be televised.  
 The revolution will not be brought to you by Xerox  
 In 4 parts without commercial interruptions.  
 The revolution will not show you pictures of Nixon  
 blowing a bugle and leading a charge by John  
 Mitchell, General Abrams and Spiro Agnew to eat  
 hog maws confiscated from a Harlem sanctuary.  
 The revolution will not be televised.

The revolution will not be brought to you by the  
 Schaefer Award Theatre and will not star Natalie  
 Woods and Steve McQueen or Bullwinkle and Julia.  
 The revolution will not give your mouth sex appeal.  
 The revolution will not get rid of the nubs.  
 The revolution will not make you look five pounds  
 thinner, because the revolution will not be televised, Brother.

There will be no pictures of you and Willie May  
 pushing that shopping cart down the block on the dead run,  
 or trying to slide that color television into a stolen ambulance.  
 NBC will not be able to predict the winner at 8:32  
 or report from 29 districts.  
 The revolution will not be televised.

There will be no pictures of pigs shooting down  
 brothers in the instant replay.  
 There will be no pictures of pigs shooting down  
 brothers in the instant replay.  
 There will be no pictures of Whitney Young being  
 run out of Harlem on a rail with a brand new process.  
 There will be no slow motion or still life of Roy  
 Wilkins strolling through Watts in a Red, Black and  
 Green liberation jumpsuit that he had been saving  
 For just the proper occasion.

Green Acres, The Beverly Hillbillies, and Hooterville  
 Junction will no longer be so damned relevant, and  
 women will not care if Dick finally gets down with  
 Jane on Search for Tomorrow because Black people  
 will be in the street looking for a brighter day.  
 The revolution will not be televised.

There will be no highlights on the eleven o'clock  
 news and no pictures of hairy armed women  
 liberationists and Jackie Onassis blowing her nose.  
 The theme song will not be written by Jim Webb,  
 Francis Scott Key, nor sung by Glen Campbell, Tom  
 Jones, Johnny Cash, Engelbert Humperdinck, or the Rare Earth.  
 The revolution will not be televised.

The revolution will not be right back after a message  
 about a white tornado, white lightning, or white people.  
 You will not have to worry about a dove in your  
 bedroom, a tiger in your tank, or the giant in your toilet bowl.  
 The revolution will not go better with Coke.  
 The revolution will not fight the germs that may cause bad breath.  
 The revolution *will* put you in the driver's seat.

The revolution will not be televised, will not be televised,  
 will not be televised, will not be televised.  
 The revolution will be no re-run brothers;  
 The revolution will be LIVE.

Gil Scott-Heron, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," in *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*, Flying Dutchman Productions, 1970.

<sup>85</sup> See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

- <sup>87</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
- <sup>88</sup> Derrida describes the function of the archon as that of the work of the keeper, the trustee, and the authority who presides over the archival field: "archontic power . . . gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, must be paired with . . . the power of *consignation*." Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 3.
- <sup>89</sup> See Tacita Dean, *Floh* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2001). *Floh* is the German term for flea market, suggesting that the initial site for the accumulation of the 163 images was Germany, a likely supposition since Dean lives and works in Berlin.
- <sup>90</sup> See Mark Godfrey, "Photography Found and Lost: On Tacita Dean's *Floh*," *October* 114 (Fall 2005), pp. 90–119.
- <sup>91</sup> Godfrey (ibid.) devotes a lengthy part of his otherwise fine essay to this issue of "de-skilling," a term with a great deal of ambiguity, and to wit, inappropriate given the lengthy interventions into the photographic medium since its inception.
- <sup>92</sup> See Hal Foster's influential essay, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in *Return of the Real*, pp. 171–203.
- <sup>93</sup> Caroline Flosdorff, "Time Machines: Concepts of Reality in Thomas Ruff's Cycle *Machines*," in *Thomas Ruff: Machines*, edited by Caroline Flosdorff and Veit Görner (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2003), pp. 7–18.
- <sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 12.
- <sup>95</sup> The importance of this concept, first introduced by Fanon in 1952, continues to reverberate and has been a theoretical influence in the work of artists such as Lorna Simpson and Glenn Ligon. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).
- <sup>96</sup> See Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).
- <sup>97</sup> For further discussion of these issues in Simpson's work, see Okwui Enwezor, "Repetition and Differentiation: Lorna Simpson's Iconography of the Racial Sublime," in *Lorna Simpson* (New York: Abrams, 2006), pp. 102–31.
- <sup>98</sup> See also the discussion of the homoerotic implications of this work in Richard Meyer, "Borrowed Voices: Glenn Ligon and the Force of Language," in *Glenn Ligon: Un/becoming*, edited by Judith Tannenbaum (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1997), pp. 13–35.
- <sup>99</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 221.
- <sup>100</sup> Benjamin (ibid.) discusses the implications of aura and indirectly authorship whereby, by freeing the hand from constituting a work directly, the mechanical apparatus engenders new modes of receivership for considerations of what a work of art is. Prior to this, Benjamin says, "The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity" (p. 220). The archival appropriation of existing images, through the act of rephotographing, evinces another layer in the course of diminishing aura.
- <sup>101</sup> Rosalind Krauss's important book, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), is one of the many forms of criticism developed along the lines of Benjamin's thought. In her powerful writings, Krauss has given this line of thinking a deeply reflexive reading in relation to contemporary art.
- <sup>102</sup> On this level, the recourse is to think of these images as "inauthentic," as "fake" Walker Evanses, thereby amplifying and glorifying the superiority of the putative original as a work of unique artistic vision.
- <sup>103</sup> According to Howard Singerman, these implications have been all but repressed by certain types of writing around the work, namely in essays by Lincoln Kirstein, Lloyd Fonvielle, and Beaumont Newhall. See Howard Singerman, "Seeing Sherrie Levine," *October* 67 (Winter 1994), pp. 78–107.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 80.
- <sup>105</sup> For further discussions of this work, see Vivan Sundaram, *Re-take of 'Amrita': Digital Photomontages* (New Delhi: Tulika Booksra, 2001); Peter Nagy, "The Sher-Gil Archive," *Grand Street* 62 (Fall 1997), p. 73; Katalin Keseru, *The Sher-Gil Archive* (Bombay: Gallery Chemould; New Delhi: Hungarian Information & Cultural Centre, 1996).
- <sup>106</sup> Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*," p. 129.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid.

# Archive Fever

Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art

Okwui Enwezor

International Center of Photography, New York

Steidl

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