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DEVELOPING AND DEFINING AN EXPERIMENTAL ARCHIVE, PROCESS, PROBLEMATIC

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores via a practice led process the confluence of ideas, the archive as a category of production and written texts as triggers of practical formulations. It does this by proposing an experimental archive which realises its own productive capacity simultaneously with seeing its own image as a system of relations, limitations and potential meanings.

A practical system of working analogue film tools is a complex and flexible compound arrangement that is highly potential in its expressive forms. This arrangement is subjected or exposed to more conceptual or traditionally philosophical forms via writing and the affects that follow range from basic overall definitions to specific concrete creative ideas. As well as a working system, or a system being worked on, the laboratory, once it is framed and documented, gathers an archival appearance by the fact that all its parts are self-reflexively 'accessioned' into another of its productions, the Archive, as a written catalogue that can then be shared with others, multiplying its meanings even further.

This dissertation does not make an argument for theory or practice. Instead it sees them as inseparable at the point of confluence. It argues that either is impoverished by the absence of the other and that each acts like a regulator, head, tail and mouth of the other. Even its image and likeness. Interchangeable, we forget what is responsible for what, theory or practice, it makes no difference.

Chapter 1: Aims and Objectives.

The Aims and Objectives of this MRES dissertation are to provide an in depth account of and critical reflection on the enquiry:

Developing And Defining an Experimental Archive. Process, Problematics and Pitfalls.

'Developing' is understood as the practical range of activities which in some cases produce material objects but also in a broader sense as the whole activity undertaken in the physical space of the workshop/archive. The whole workshop/archive environment undergoes development through practical projects, administrative arrangement and organisation and reflective forms of documentation. I have selected a list of blog entries that best serve to illustrate this activity which are referenced in Appendix 1.

'Defining' is understood as a necessary stage in summarising the outcome of reading and interpretation of texts as well as the use of texts to inform processes. The need to define the archive stems from the fact that it is not operating in a vacuum. Its freedoms arise largely out of a change in the expectations of industrial analogue cinema apparatus that has been hastened by the significant move to digital workflows. This has created a huge surplus of analogue machinery that now finds new expression and use wherever it can be salvaged.

However, it arguably still forms part of the history of cinema (if my own definition of cinema is followed¹) and seeks to connect its relevance to this whenever possible.

Another way of putting this enquiry might be 'The film lab in post industrial analogue cinema' but this runs the risk of ignoring the history of experimental cinema and its alternative use of apparatus.

Also, this question, to be properly researched would entail too much of a detour into the work of

other labs and practices, far older and more advanced than mine, and this would reduce the practical focus of my own enquiry.

Experimental methods underpin both areas of work. Activities undertaken in the workshop are experimental because they often have open or loose criteria. They are different or new ways of using and approaching well established tools, apparatus and archival administrations and operations. For example we can trace a distinct change of use of the flatbed editing table (for example the Steenbeck) from the film editing or cutting room, to the archive and then to the diy lab where they are re-purposed as contact printers and machines for winding and preparing raw film stock.

'Definitions' are experimental because they are tentative and suggestive. Also definitions arise partly out of the encounter with texts and are quickly employed in the service of creative ideas. That is, theoretical ideas and concepts are imbricated into practical ideas. I have outlined some examples of this occurring in the process of reading and writing and have organised them to form Appendix 2. This is the form then that 'definitions' are presented in and articulated through.

The ideas in Appendix 2 involve practical works and although they are not being submitted as finished works it is important to consider them as part of the body of the dissertation. They are arranged into an appendix because otherwise they interrupt the flow too much of the main thesis. However the appendix in itself has footnotes, diagrams and references that all describe and outline the methods used. They are works in progress but significantly afford a window on the whole activity of the workshop/archive. This is also the case with the two practical work pieces I am submitting in this MRES. I will go into detail on these in chapter 4.

Defining an experimental archive is partially achieved by the material traces that are left by the encounter with theories and concepts outside of it. Some of these texts are outlined in the Literature

Review in chapter 3. The term 'experimental' might need clarifying to aid understanding of the context of this study however I will outline my understanding and application of it as this supports my case for the freedoms it affords. Experimental can be defined in various ways. The 'accurate critique of existing conditions and the deliberate supersession of them' (Debord, 1957. trans Knab, 2006, p22). A practice where 'no teleology is inferable' (Gidal, 1989, p13). Experimental can be a catch all term for anything that has no focussed criteria or single goal and instead carries out tests. It can be trying things out and failing. Trying other things out. Recording the outcomes. Thinking through ideas in light of anything discovered. In all these stages though something is experienced and this range and variation of experiences adds up to the formation of theories and conclusions. One immediate pitfall is the problem 'is an experimental archive an oxymoron?' Archives are associated with order and certainty, experiments with danger and uncertainty. There is a tension between these two which offers no easy solution. Alternatively this tension could be seen as a positive drive where 'the archive is the key concept in which theory and practice interlock' (Ballhausen, 2013, p21).

It is important to assert the role that the orthodox archive as a concept, activity and institution has on this experimental investigation, obviously because its the established practice I am choosing to occupy. Much has been written about the archive both as a theoretical operation as well as one defined by managerial and bureaucratic systems. There is also now the term 'Counter Archives' which have been variously defined as political, ingenious, resistant and community based. They are embodied differently and have explicit intention to historicise differently and to disrupt conventional national narratives.² The internet its considered as 'an archive without walls' (Ketelaar, 2003, p2) and paradigm changes in archive function and use are explicitly linked to the new technologies that underpin digital culture, (Lison, Mars, Medak, Prelinger, 2019).

From this changing situation in a digital era arises the aim to make explicit the thinking behind the

Nachleben Archive. This is the title I have given my project. Drawing inspiration from Aby Warburg's notion of *Nachleben*, meaning afterlife or survival, *Nachleben* is an experimental archive that attempts to bring together theories, ideas, concepts, creative output and practical operations that all find expression and articulation through the medium of analogue film and its mechanisms. In another sense it is an attempt at configuring the archive as a production mode.

Since we live, arguably, in a post analogue cinema world (Rodowick, 2007) I am interested in what is happening to analogue machinery now that it has been replaced or more accurately relieved of its standardised use. This use could be defined in many complex ways from the position of the text of cinema or films but here I am considering the specific function of machinery which commonly comes with 'normal' use boundaries defined by the typical results produced and desired in the service of narrative, commercial and conventional moving pictures. Another pitfall arises in this clumsy definition. Is anything in cinema really standard? Is it not true that all cinema apparatus can be articulated in limitless ways? Whilst this may be generally true, in fact many pieces of laboratory equipment are hard wired to perform one job. They were designed to perform one task. So only now, when they are available outside of a commercial directive can alternative and new functions be devised.

Finally, a third aim emerges from this praxis, using these tools to make films or in other cases sculptural artefacts, objects of curiosity or works of art. These further form part of the arrangement of the collection thus acting as unfinished-finished synecdoche where the whole is still undergoing development.

One objective is to compress the relations between objects in the collection in an attempt to create a better sense of a working system, that is, representing a whole apparatus that encourages interpretations by use. This compression is partly achieved by placing objects in nearby field to each other by regarding them each in turn as an entry in the catalogue, having only a top level category defined.

For example 'Film Viewing Machine' is a top level class of object and as a concept can reduce projectors, flat table editors and even a 'loupe', a small hand held magnifying glass to examine film manually, to the same essential class of object.

In each of these cases further fields of information are available in the database. This seeks to acknowledge qualities and functions of machines that might not be considered if they are confined to the service of certain fixed processes. For example, a flat table viewing/editing machine can be re-purposed into a kind of printer if certain modifications are made to it. So on the index card it is not referred to as merely a 'Steenbeck' but also an experimental contact printer (after modification) although its top level category might be 'Film Viewing Machine'. After even further modification they can become a whole new instrument. It could then exist in the top class category 'Film Printing Machines' and others such as 'Experimental Modifications'.

The nature of the Archive is partly already defined by it being one that comprises analogue films, analogue film machinery and paperwork, books and periodicals, personal and published that all pertain to this field. One of the central problems in this practice is the nature and form of the catalogue. Is it a database and thus employs computers and digital networks? Is it analogue and therefore takes up physical space? Is it available to be shared? How is it arranged or specifically what use does it make of archival science's best practices or does its 'experimental' status relieve it of any such normalities? Is it intended that the catalogue becomes a work in itself in the same way that some of the operations of the archive do? Thus a core objective is to find the best form of catalogue arrangement that most supports and articulates the experimental nature of the project.

Another aim is to make consideration of unconventional archive forms namely ebay and Youtube. This is for a number of reasons that must be outlined here. Ebay is a source and destination of film artefact material. That is, it offers one (amongst many) resources for discovering, for acquiring and

researching analogue films in multiple gauges which in effect is another aim of the practical aspect of this study. In chapter 4 I will go into more detail about how ebay acts as a platform for the display and exhibition of a work of Art and how it informs and influences the work in the first place. Ebay is also used to inform and develop the creative ideas/projects mentioned above that appear in Appendix 2. Ebays' range, size and ubiquity are important properties that impact on definitions of what an experimental archive might look like if it made deliberate reference and use of ebay as a resource.

Youtube is a well known online media platform that has been the subject of commentary and discussion around themes of its archive-like nature (Ketelaar, 2003, Gracy, 2007, McKee, 2011, Shoheit, 2010). It is really beyond this dissertation to examine this issue in comprehensive detail, however some degree of analysis of Youtube has been necessary to create the settings for one of the practical submission where the root episteme of Youtube is embodied in a singular analogue objective form. As well as being referred to in chapter 4, Youtube is also discussed in chapter 5 where closer consideration is made between archiving in digital and analogue senses.

After general aims and objectives are outlined I will focus on the methodological approaches that fit best in terms of articulating the possible definitions and developments of the whole project.

A literature review will follow that seeks to limit itself to material that pertains to purposeful manual activities as well as considering some of the milestone references in the field of archiving.

A close look at the practical operations and activities of the workshop and a similarly focussed look at digital and analogue archiving in terms of concepts that occur in the field form the last two main chapters before the conclusion and three different appendices that offer support material to the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Methodology. Practice As Research

Developing And Defining an Experimental Archive. Process, Problematics and Pitfalls.

The methodology governing my research approach is a mixture of hermeneutic engagement with texts coupled with practical works and a reflective account of both. It is loosely based on Robin Nelsons mixed methodology PaR of 'knowing-what, knowing-that and knowing-how' (Nelson, 2012) and a more general arts based methodology of imbricating theory in practice through reflection of process. All the practical procedures and operations carried out in the workshop/lab are the means to explore the research enquiry of Developing and Defining An Experimental Archive.

Chapter 1 suggested that this process is not without its problems and pitfalls and awareness of this serves to draw clear boundaries to the scope of the overall activity. But these problems also highlight a central issue at stake, namely that an experimental approach to this subject, archiving, is inherently fraught with difficulties. The nature of these difficulties will be discussed throughout the main writing.

The types of practical research I have been undertaking range from searching for and collecting extant films usually on the 16 and 35mm gauges to fixing and re-using what is commonly considered redundant cinema production equipment. Fixing machinery has usually been followed by testing and designing alterations and modifications that bring out new uses or explores old ones in different ways. Films are selected according to their suitability to explore specific creative ideas which themselves are often responses to written texts. In each instance of its mediation through the apparatus of the workshop/lab, every film not only engages machinery in different ways but also ends up as a catalogued item in the archive. Archiving itself is a hermeneutic activity. A recent conference on archive studies produced, via social media, the question 'When does a collection become an archive?' (Kuhn, 2019)

It is possible to imagine an experimental archive but not an experimental collection. The use, animation, enlivening and interpretation of objects or holdings in an archive is precisely what produces the archive as a tangible proceed or set of procedures producing output. This production, as something beyond the static material holdings, is the action and trace of the hermeneutic engagement that could be termed 'the archive'. The opposite though is also 'an archive', the collection yet to receive any kind of interpretation whatsoever such as hidden secret service papers and documents awaiting behind legal frameworks of access.

Yet there exists no easy method that makes a direct and permanent link between the material holdings and the material they produce through the agency of interpretation. In fact, it could be said that all interpretations produced based on encounters with archival holdings are always separated from this source by the fact that they are re-mediations of something, not the thing itself.

In my project this separation is explored as a problematic by both assembling the collection and making its interpretation just another part of the collection. At which point in time, if ever, the archive encounters exterior interpretations (exterior from me), remains to be seen and I certainly do welcome this stage. A single collection produces a limit defined by the boundary of its material but perhaps also by the open boundaries of writing itself. For example an archive of farming techniques that solely depicts uses of tractors might one day produce interesting poetry or even music.

Multiple collections often define the physical body of archives³ and it could be argued that it is the potential interaction between elemental, collection centred 'strata' (fonds) within an overall archive that finally produces the Archive, if we allow ourselves, as agents of interpretation to be seen as a kind of 'fonds'. When you 'make use' of an archive, you are, however temporarily, a part of that archive. This is fully acknowledged in my practice and taken to its logical end point. I am the subject and object of the archive. The escape comes in the form of the works which are produced from inside this loop. Able to stand outside of, yet informed and devised by the conceptual configurations of the archive. They are what I refer to in Chapter 1 as finished synecdoche within a

whole that is still developing. In other words their finished status is determined by their artefactual conformity but their devising or design (even as tests) is drawn from the archival system that can only undergo development through time.

Practicalities demand that all the items in the collection need to be catalogued in some way. I have been exploring different ways of achieving this from software to manual writing of index cards. The arranging of a database entails thinking through the meaning and possible uses of the whole system. As this is under a creative and experimental direction which is itself under the influence of theories and texts which I encounter in reading, the most flexible and open technique I have arrived at is manual index cards, (see fig 1). Despite their non-digital and thus non-shareable form, cardboard index cards afford an extremely versatile, configurable and provisional means of gathering, organising and interpreting items. They allow rapid development in trying out recorded details repeatedly until a stable definition emerges for their form or arrangement. A problematic here already is that this stability cannot be known before. It only emerges through experiments. The index cards and their recorded information are the visible material result of thinking and contemplation on the meaning and ontological potential of every object whether it be a film, book or projector. This administrative process is the superimposition of normally separated fields of activity to 'flatten' them into equal resources.

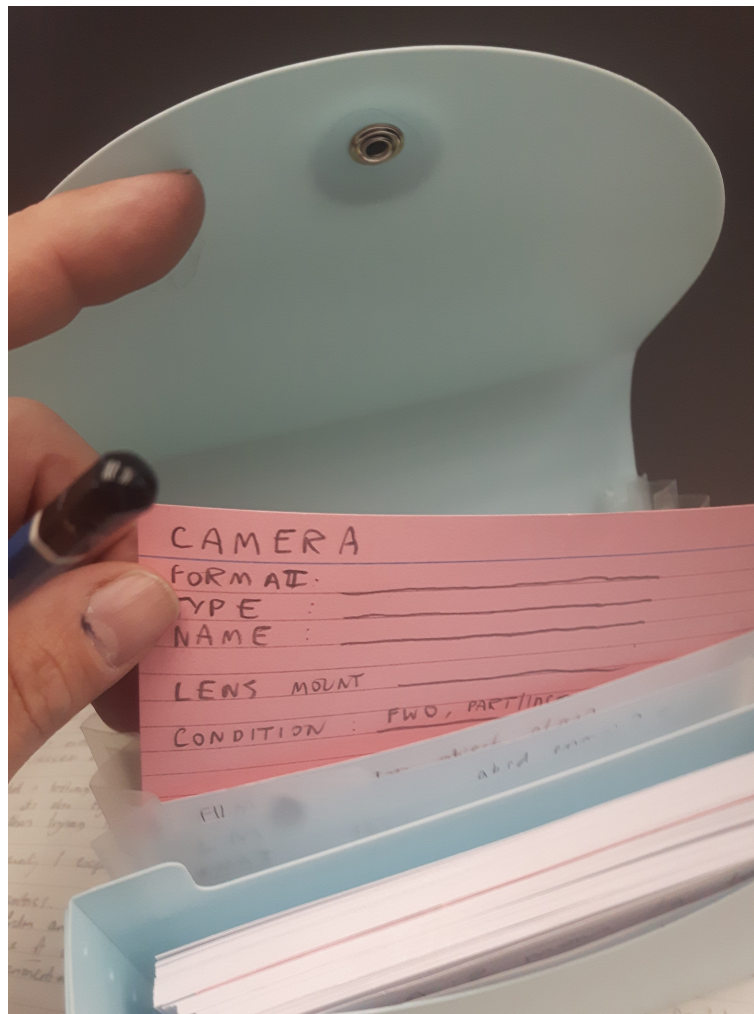


Fig 1

With the idea in mind of 'flattening' I have devised a method to generate catalogue numbers based on four random numbers from 0 – 9 using ten sided dice. For example 72/86, the number incidentally I have given to this dissertation. This range gives me potentially 10,000 individual objects. The idea of a random number is important in removing human affect or design from the cataloguing sequence and thus the kind of relations that provide valuable information in normal archives when respecting original order is paramount. Instead the order, any order is now left to chance and is defined by the encounters that users have. The pitfall here is clear.

This is a project that simultaneously resists but relies on engagement from other people and agencies. The escape conduit is the works that are made.

For example the 35mm film work made as a practical part of this dissertation acts as the inaugural and perhaps even symbolic first entry object in the experimental archive I am creating. Logically then it should be catalogue number 001. But this is problematical for a number of reasons.

Firstly it demands henceforth that a progression through decimal counting must be followed with the next item being 002, then 003, and so on. This portrays far too much a serial, linear sequence. Also, it has no end and it is not clear how many digits we may one day occupy, i.e. if my collection reaches a thousand items, numbers now need to be 0001, 0002, 0003, etc. Additionally, there is a danger for a too easy historical hierarchy in the form of old and new, i.e., 99 is much newer than 09, depending on the method of accessioning that is used. The need for an impromptu, open and spontaneous accessioning technique that renders all objects conceptually equal has led to this simple permutation based system.

Finally, browsing (see fig 2), as an open and receptive process as opposed to a goal and aim orientated one, will be possible by browsing a catalogued list of these 4 digit number sets. 95/94, 58/03, 20/13. What are they all related to? A user cannot know until they have followed the item through to its description and further details.

This matrix of potential is designed to create an environment in which users can stumble across things by chance. The catalogue number is of course just one field in a database amongst several others most importantly an items name, description, history, provenance and further details. In terms of making conceptual uses of terms such as 'fonds' I am considering creating top level item descriptions that reduce categories of items to very simple definitions. This is mentioned in chapter 01 in the context of for instance a film projector, steenbeck editing table and magnifying loupe all being classed as 'film viewing machines'.



Fig 2

In order to generate and develop ideas for projects within the archive (for it to gain definition) I have been reading widely on a range of subjects and issues that all pertain to cinema, cinema technology, film archives and film restoration and preservation and all their respective histories. I have also detoured into cultural memory studies, traditional archaeology, art history and philosophy. The method behind this is to expose practice to theory. The body of texts engaged with are all part of the literature review material but also include many other kinds of texts like quotes, statements and remarks found in social media channels, websites and at conference presentations.

Most theory is in textual form so another way of saying this is to expose open creative practical resources to textual materials. This exposure comes through me as the agent in both understanding and digesting texts and as the agent in transforming them into physically substantiated ideas. In other words the materials I have selected include films, film apparatus such as cameras and written ideas. When there is an encounter that produces a realistic (feasible, possible, doable) idea the archive/project gains development through the realisation of that idea and its addition to the body of the project. This method makes acknowledgement of the possibility of object and subject being a whole rather than separate. Much like the abandonment of the duality of archival holdings vs interpretations, there is no distinction between object and subject in my process. Subjects or mental continuum's, have material form in writing and text. Objects, external images and machinery are material. Everything then is material in the sense of material to work *on* and material to work *with*. A pitfall here is that this produces a cyclical structure that has no end. Whilst this might present challenges to writing a comprehensive framework it could also simply be a modern appearance of Ouroboros.⁴ Using this mode of perception brings about the necessary dynamic interplay between ideas and ideas, unformed to formed, to final creations.

The archive as a subject in the humanities, an activity in the public realm as well as a concept for artists and activists presents endless problems when it is examined. There is no authority that regulates the use of the term like exists perhaps for the term 'architect' so its application is wide ranging and free. Many would argue against the status of this whole project as in any way archival for instance. In public and official archives there are of course specialist rules, best practices and standards and the history of archival science has a clear progression in these respects (Ridener, 2009). In many ways though my intention has been to probe the openness of the simple term 'archive' and see what emerges through trying to understand what makes an archive by formulating and arranging one along experimental lines, free of the normalising restraints that characterise

'proper' archives or media depositories. All the time understanding that the traces, secretions, evidences and records I make that are not the main focus are just as likely to become the objects of some future attention.

The main method of sourcing films during this research has been the online auction service 'ebay.' I have purchased approximately 33 films since starting in 2017. On ebay films are sold as physical objects with a preview of the moving imagery by stills or frame grabs. This habit or practice has informed the idea of producing an object centric way of looking at the essential material trace of Cinema, the film print (see fig 3). In very simple terms, as emerges out of the practice of collecting from any source, the object itself always takes on certain fourfold characteristics. This fourfold form includes its manual readability, its development as a kind of 'text', its concealed and wound form and its appearance as a projected image. Also it appears as two sets of pairs, the projected image and its readings and the stored passive reel and its opened revelatory photographic display. In which ways other aspects of cinema relate to or are represented in this diagram like performance, screen writing, techniques, set design, are outside the scope of this enquiry although a preliminary consideration will reveal that apparatus for instance, is a subset within the reel, the concealed and wound object because the object is a product of industrial manufacturing and subsequent machine handling whether there is an image or not.

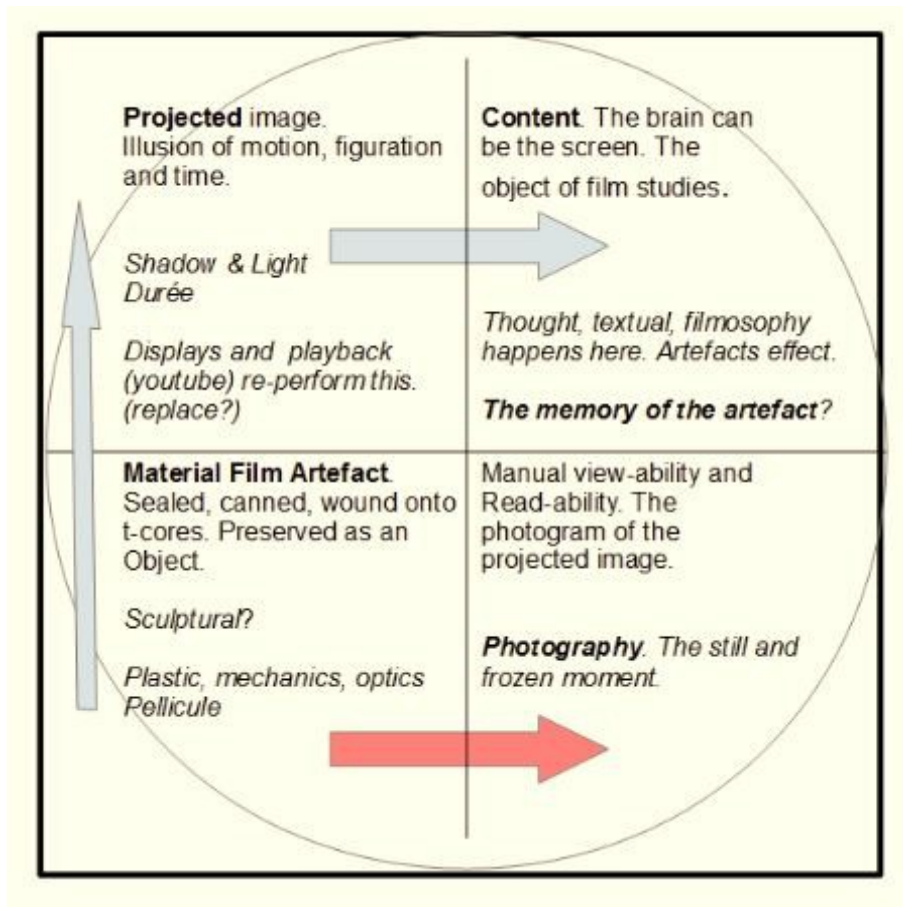


Fig 3

The methodology behind this schematic is to think through what the artefact means on its own, *as if it were being discovered in the distant future at a time when nothing else pertaining to it exists*. It is also a technique for thinking outwards from the artefact, what it might mean if an image did survive or what an image could say entirely without the context of the civilisation that produced it. It is here that my specific interest in perforations and sprocket holes becomes informative because it is these marks and not the image itself that will tell us something different about the object. The image in some cases in fact may disappear altogether leaving only the image of the base carrier and its strange holes in regular intervals. In this reading all film works are reducible to the pristine condition of Nam June Paik's 'Zen for Film' (1965) provided of course that someone is able to reconstruct a suitable film projector from information encoded in the film strip alone.

This experimental speculative position is informed by the simple fact that film print artefacts have a proven longevity. They are in the same class of object as flint axes, carved bones or votive bronze relics like ornamental axes and weapons. The material medium of analogue film is at the core of most if not all of the methods employed to develop the practical lab and its offshoot activities and this conceptual re-visualising of the film print artefact has been undertaken in order to submit it into and subject it to an alternative framework of analysis. Partly to re-enliven it, partly to explore ideas, partly to expose it to theories. This exposure has been informed by cultural memory studies and specifically where this discipline suggests relics and lost or forgotten artefacts belong to different modes of memory, namely passive and active, forgetting and remembering. (see fig 4).

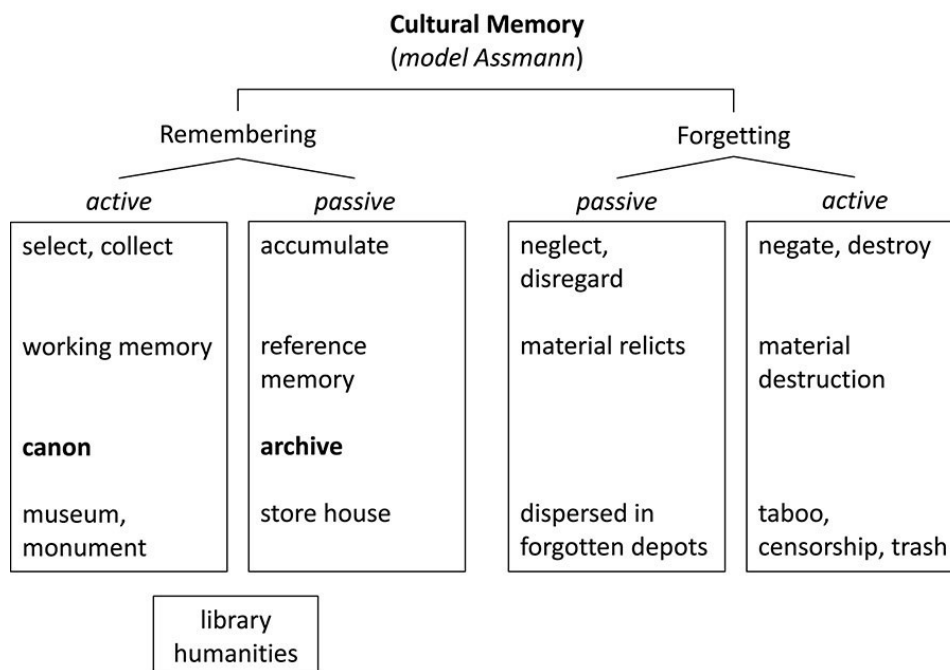


Fig 4

What could define an experimental archive is that, referring to the diagram in fig 4, by shifting an artefact from the passive forgetting of lost depots into the passive remembering of the archive the status of active remembering is achieved. The circle is completed, the serpent bites its tail.

The experimental archive here then, whether it is used or not, interpreted or ignored, is a

memorialising activity whose heterogeneous contents *cannot* precondition the content of its intellectual value creation (Ballhausen, 2013, p21).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review draws material from many different sources including literary works, chapters in compendiums, research and journal papers, conference key points, social media statements and websites. These sources serve to illustrate the wide and varied nature of ideas about the archive.

There is a great deal of literary material that discusses archives in general because they are part of such a wide field that includes memory studies, cinema and media heritage and the writing of history itself (Steedman, 2001). Little has been written on experimental approaches to archiving or about the problematics faced in trying to explore an implicitly ordered and ordering phenomena through disruptive subversions or interventions. For the purpose of this literature review I have limited my reading to the kinds of material that might offer insights, technical plans or concepts that are possible to integrate into my project directly, either as informing ideas or contextual settings.

For example a wide reading on archives uncovers terms and phrases that are native to this field such as 'fonds' or 'vidimus' (Ridener, 2008) which can then be experimentally re-thought or interpreted inside the boundaries of my project. In these instances *vidimus* is the act of seeing, or witnessing a document or record and producing another one to make a validation or authorisation and this bears interesting similarities to the process of seeking comments and written responses to specific material creative works in order to generate thoughts and interpretations around them. Likewise in the archival sense *fonds* is a set of records that have a single originating source like a person, family or organisation and this idea is applied in my project in the form of new film records that implement some design or conceptual plan.

Milestones, landmarks and waymarkers

Jacques Derrida's 'Archive Fever, A Freudian Impression' (Derrida, 1995) is often cited as an important milestone in thinking about the archive. Ostensibly a remediation of a lecture he delivered firstly at the house of Freud in London in the summer of 1994, 'Archive Fever' is experimental in its form and its strength and influence perhaps resides in the fact that it “explores the relationship between memory and writing” itself (Steedman, 2001, p5). Writing, for Derrida, is an activity undertaken knowing that “the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its coming into existence and in its relationship to the future” (Derrida 1996, p17). It thus really constitutes a work of writing based on a conception of the technological conditioning of archives which had already found expression in the work of Kittler (Kittler, 1986). In her work 'Dust' (Steedman, 2001, p5) Carolyn Steedman mentions the fact that Derrida makes much in Archive Fever of the portable Macintosh on which he had began to write and this strikes a chord with Kittlers work 'Gramophone, Film, Typewriter' (Kittler, 1986) which undertakes an archaeological examination of the titular devices or mediums in terms of how they relate to the things they say or express.

This Can be contrasted though with Steedman though where she suggests that in fact Archive Fever is not about archives at all but rather a “sustained contemplation on a work of history (Steedman, 2001. p3). A playful and challenging work, Steedman's approach covers archiving from the perspective of the writing of history, the problems of memory and archives and even the illness persistent in the dust itself in the form of anthrax.

Earlier, in the 1960's, Michel Foucault was also ruminating on the significance of the archive and in 'The Archaeology of Knowledge (Foucault, 1972) wrote the often quoted statement “The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events” (Foucault, 1972, p129). Taking this and many of the experimental formulations produced

by Foucault's method has been central in informing the overall shape and philosophical foundation of this project. For instance the idea that the archive is not that “which collects the dust of its statements” but rather “...is the system of its functioning” (Foucault, 1972).

Modern turns.

A huge gap in the development in archival science is documented by Terry Cook (Ridener, 2009) but could be polemically concluded by Craig Gault in his recent 'End of Archival Ideas' (Gault, 2019). Here he argues that the reason for the lack of new ideas in archiving is largely due to the influence of information itself and how its own technologies and mechanisms are shaping the way people demand and use recorded materials. His paper is a good source of information and bibliographies on researches like Geoffrey Yeo who publishes prolifically through journals like *Archivaria* on the nature of the record in the digital environment.

This is also at the centre of 'Archives' (Lison, Mars, Medak, Prelinger, 2019) which looks into 'How digital networks and services bring the issues of archives out of the realm of institutions and into the lives of everyday users'. This work offers some very short but pointed positions on the notion of the archive as it finds itself changing in the digital age. Especially relevant to my process are ideas like “my intervention seeks to position archives as places of possibility, as places where we might seek to perform struggle, expose presentism, make theories actionable, refuse dominant narratives of inevitability, and imagine and stage a broad spectrum of futures” (Prelinger, 2019. pp3-4).

Prelinger's practice combines such theory but with a substantial physical application as he was involved in the founding of the Prelinger archive in 1983.

How the archive as a concept appears in varied practices can be seen in several works that look at it from the position of contemporary art. The compilation of essays and articles in 'Cinema and Art as Archive. Form, Medium, Memory' (Saba, Federici, 2014) shows how contemporary art has picked up many facets of the archive and incorporated them into operations and thus created meaning

making components of many modern Art productions and exhibitions. This collection demonstrates the wide interpretation of archives and the ubiquitous theoretical presence of Derridas' archive and supports the view of some that much art practice follows an archival impulse of its own (Foster, 2004). In a similar vein 'Performing The Archive. The transformation of the archive in contemporary art from repository of documents to art medium' (Osthoff, 2009) demonstrates a wide usage of archive forms in actual works of art with collections becoming works of art and works of art becoming archives.

Specific consideration of the lab environment as a means to survey archival thinking can be seen in 'Handmade films and artist-run labs: The chemical sites of film's counterculture' is an online published article by Catanese and Parikka on NECSUS, the European Journal of Media Studies (Catanese, Parikka 2018.) It makes strong assertions such as 'experimental practices rely on the infrastructures of the lab familiar from the history of film as an industrial technique but also resonating with the contemporary context of media and humanities labs' which could serve as an effective background contextualisation of my own practice. Catanese and Parikka add 'labs can sometimes function as experimental media archaeology sites, practising techniques that have been used during the early days of cinematography', although they fail to provide specific examples that might support or counter this argument as in my case where fundamental changes in equipment design, changes fundamentally the nature of the possible film work.

At the opposite end from this academic study is practitioners collecting and publishing ideas in a book that followed the same titled conference 'Film In The Present Tense' (Greenfield, Phillips, Schroedinger, Speidel, Widmann, 2018). This provides a rich illustration of the general practical context of my project, the revival and survival of analogue film techniques and culture. Although positive and enthusiastic the book only manages to be brief and introductory, the task of summarising such a diverse practically focussed conference being difficult. It does achieve a very mixed type of contributor though from diy lab activist to national film archivists.

At a state funded level the Austrian Film Museum in Vienna undertakes a very interesting mixture of projects in media and film related heritage and preservation. 'Work|s In Progress. Digital Film Restoration Within Archives' (Parth, Hanley, Ballhausen, 2013) displays this mixture with a host of short, precise and thought provoking chapters on various projects the museum carries out. It includes a revised version of Paulo Cherchi Usai's speech delivered at the BFI, South bank, for the Ernest Lindgren Memorial Lecture in 2010. A speech that has become famous within the film archive world as it includes such provocative statements as, "People can and should be able to live without moving images" (Usai , p29) and "the archive is the European >key concept<, in which theory and practice interlock". (Ballhausen, p21) This and other definitions offered in the book are extremely useful as methodological underpinnings to my research even though the budgets, resources and scale of works is entirely different from my own.

The more pluralistic and diy nature of artists appropriation of analogue techniques is well documented in 'Process Cinema: Handmade Film in the Digital Age' (MacKenzie, Marchessault 2019). The first book to 'trace the development of handmade and hand-processed film in its historical and contemporary contexts and mapping the genealogy of handmade film, and uncovering confluences, influences, and interstices between various international movements, sites, and practices'. This work shows the nature of the unwritten up and certainly under theorised current status of the film renaissance but this also means that a healthy plurality exists which resists homogeneity and encourages variance in communities and local or regional perspectives. Surprisingly there is very little mention of the archive in this collection of essays even though, for me, the very production of analogue film artefacts is always an implicitly archival process.

Exhibitions, Events and Conferences.

Following on from and perhaps inspired by Amsterdam University Press's 'Exposing The Film Apparatus' (Fossati, Van Den Oever 2016) the conference "Materiality, Aesthetics and the History

of Technology. The François Lemai Collection as Laboratory” was organised in Quebec in May 2019 at the Université Laval. I sent a proposal which was successful and I was invited to attend. It is difficult to obtain information about the proceedings and final outcomes of the event however, it clearly illustrates the growing desire within traditional cinema history to re-acquire familiarity with the actual tools of the industry in new and refreshing ways. For instance some of the proposals submissions call out includes ideas like “the implicit conceptual structures of machines”. As a review source this conference supports the idea of a study of historic technology not necessarily to learn about it but instead a study with old machines in order to learn from them (Ingold 2013, Nevill 2019).

The influence of counter archives on rethinking heritage was the subject of a recent event held at the German Historical Institute London. This event was entitled “From the Ruins of Preservation: A Symposium on Rethinking Heritage Through Counter-Archives” (GHIL 2019) and has been available to watch online. Although no moving image collections are represented, there was an interesting talk about the Highland Folk Museum (Hill, 2019) which raised for me personally the issue of the amateur, including details like the choice to handwrite labels and display commentary. The sense of analogue film tools now being 'folk instruments' is an underlying conceptual operation in my projects and the link to folkloric cultures, processes and history is an unexplored one.

'Film in The Present Tense', already mentioned above as a book was an international symposium organised by LaborBerlin in cooperation with the Film Institute of the Berlin University of the Arts in October 2018. LaborBerlin is a project in similar vein to BEEF in Bristol. (Bristol Expanded and Experimental Film). Much can be gleaned by the documentation on the website including headings on discussions such as 'Chance, Uncertainty, Decay, Failure' covering film technologies disappearance or 'The Intervening Substance' looking at the scenario of the end of industrial film stock manufacturing. This event clearly signposts the future potential in a meeting between the

more artisan lab movement and big state funded archives and film heritage institutions. A difficulty or tension can be seen in the way the two fields operate. An emerging network driven by individual artistic imperatives and an establishment of sorts, populated and driven by orthodox professional hierarchies, careers and the commercial logic of the market.

Chapter 4. Practice and Works

“I'd love to find somebody to fund an experimental archive. You know what I mean - where we could try out ideas without having to worry about the financial implications. I would just like to have the ability to change, represent, and rethink until we got things right. Purely an experiment.”
(Francis, 2008.p106)

Archivists are socialized to collect, not create. But if we choose (and for many, it's not a choice) to direct our knowledge, skills and agency towards solidarity, resistance and change, the record we ourselves make is as important as those we preserve.

Prelinger (Twitter, 14:39 2nd June 2019)

The workshop/lab itself AS an archive production.

The workshop and everything in it functions like a inter-mediated system that resists an easy encapsulation of its properties because it is constituted as a potential. That is I have conceptualised the project as an inseparable whole and this includes every machine, film, book and me as an agent participating in this network. The public cannot encounter this environment directly but I have conducted tours and many aspects of it are documented by blog posts which are available online.⁵ Collaborative projects with other artists and film makers have formed part of its activities such as Esther Campbell and Rod McLachlan. In the former case this has involved developing negative film and scanning to digital formats and in the latter case the scanning of colour positives to produce digital moving images.

The standard need to make a recorded arrangement of the objects in the archive has been conducted by choosing a cheap and simple form which nevertheless affords freedoms and manoeuvrability that

digital forms do not support so easily. Index card systems and other analogue forms also afford an important phenomena that has greatly reduced in digital systems, that of discovery through browsing, or chance encounters. It is difficult to imagine a digital equivalent to browsing through index cards as shown in the picture below (fig 5) as there is no tactile medium in digital that allows searching without a search term or word . The internet can be browsed but only with premeditated markers, in can typically only be searched with a precognition as opposed to 'blind searching'.



fig 5

A similar search process informs much of my reading as texts link to other texts, ideas likewise. As the ongoing exposure to textual, written ideas and concepts progresses so does the amount of material in the archive making this project a long term and long view undertaking. Only an early initiatory phase can be represented in this enquiry. In fact, this MRES research itself is the instrument of induction for the opus that this undertaking may turn out to be. It is outside the scope of this enquiry to produce an account of the preliminary historic phase of this project which

involved collecting, saving and the building of a suitable space to house everything. One of the problematics in developing such a personal archive or commencing one is that this is a huge temporal undertaking in its very design.

Some examples within this, Nitrate scans, flicker analysis and experimental restorations.

After acquiring some 35mm nitrate film from different sources I managed to digitise one of the short pieces that itself has separated into two. Once digitised its easy and quick to join frames together and produce video clips that can be watched over and over or posted to the internet or shared widely, (see fig 6). Typically in an archive the aim would be to clean the image and improve things like image stability, flicker and remove dust and damage. Then after this is done the clip might be presented somewhere, compiled onto a DVD release, find its way into someone's research or any number of display contexts. I wanted to produce a video clip to show to the staff at the Cinema where it was found and when I had settled (after much experimentation) on the frame rate of 13FPS I observed something quite important. In digital versions of silent films there is no black pause between frames when the projector blade would be obscuring the transporting passage of the film strip. Bearing in mind that an important aspect of this project is the understanding of the role of cinema technology, as cameras, projectors and films are all made equal in an experimental archival arrangement, it occurred to me that it would be an ideal experiment to try and reinstate the flicker in the digital version.

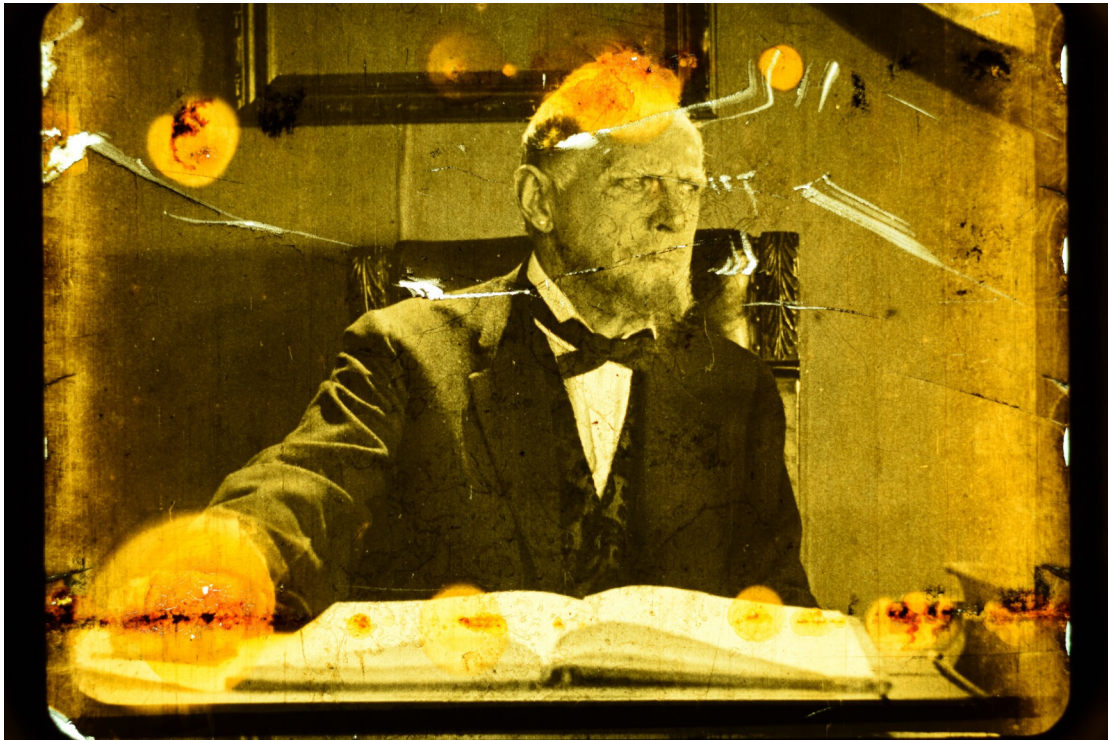


Fig 6

Not to do this would be to allow the projector mechanism to effectively become invisible, or erased in digital or electronic versions. Without working projectors in the future people will not understand how early images were captured or why they looked the way they did (Rodowick, 2007)

The first thing one has to know to achieve this is what the ratio is in analogue cinema projectors between light and dark, between the image as seen on screen and the darkness of the closed blade. Common 'how to' descriptions easily found on Youtube talk in terms of frequency or the amount of times a frame is projected and the amount of times a new image moves into the gate (Hess, 2015). But no one seems to have measured the ratio of the two stages. Is it 50/50 as most people 'believe' because when you look at a projector blade or shutter, it can appear as though the dark and open areas are equal. After making measurements in two different ways I arrived at an accurate answer. The two methods employed consisted of videoing some 35mm projections at high speeds (300,600,1200 FPS) and also measuring the shutter angle in degrees. With two different film gauges and with two different blade designs I arrived at the ratio 3:2. In any video version of a moving

image that originated on film the image is seen for 40 per cent longer than in a cinema. Or in a two hour movie watched at the cinema, 48 minutes of the time you are in darkness with no image on the screen. Or in a 90 minute movie, your eyes are in darkness for 36 minutes and see projected images for only 54 minutes. It was one thing to arrive at these findings but quite another to design them into the form of a digital clip. In order to do this you must use high frame rates. Namely 130FPS! You do it by repeating the first image three times and then the black twice. Then you repeat all this again. As you have ten steps in this process you times ten by the frame rate (in our case it is 13, after experimenting with different speeds) and so this results in a frame rate for the video clip of 130FPS. But software for editing and assembling video often have a frame rate cap around 120. In fact only 48 or 65 frames per second are considered high in current developments in cinema.

Video has difficulties in deliberate flickering. It does not like the image to be constantly interrupted by full black screens. Even though the sequencing of images is correct in the clips produced, the flicker seems to cause serious problems for the video playback. The upshot of this is that it is almost impossible, even with modern digital tools to re-produce the historic projection effect 'truthfully'. Digital information can not do something which is mechanical. It can not be mechanical. The analogue film image is mechanical.

To achieve this ratio of picture to black a video segment must consist of the image repeated 3 times followed by 2 black frames as can be seen displayed in fig 7. This correctly produces the ratio of 3:2 and the frame rate of 13FPS if the clip is rendered to 65FPS, but it still does not produce the overall flicker frequency of 26hz for the picture.

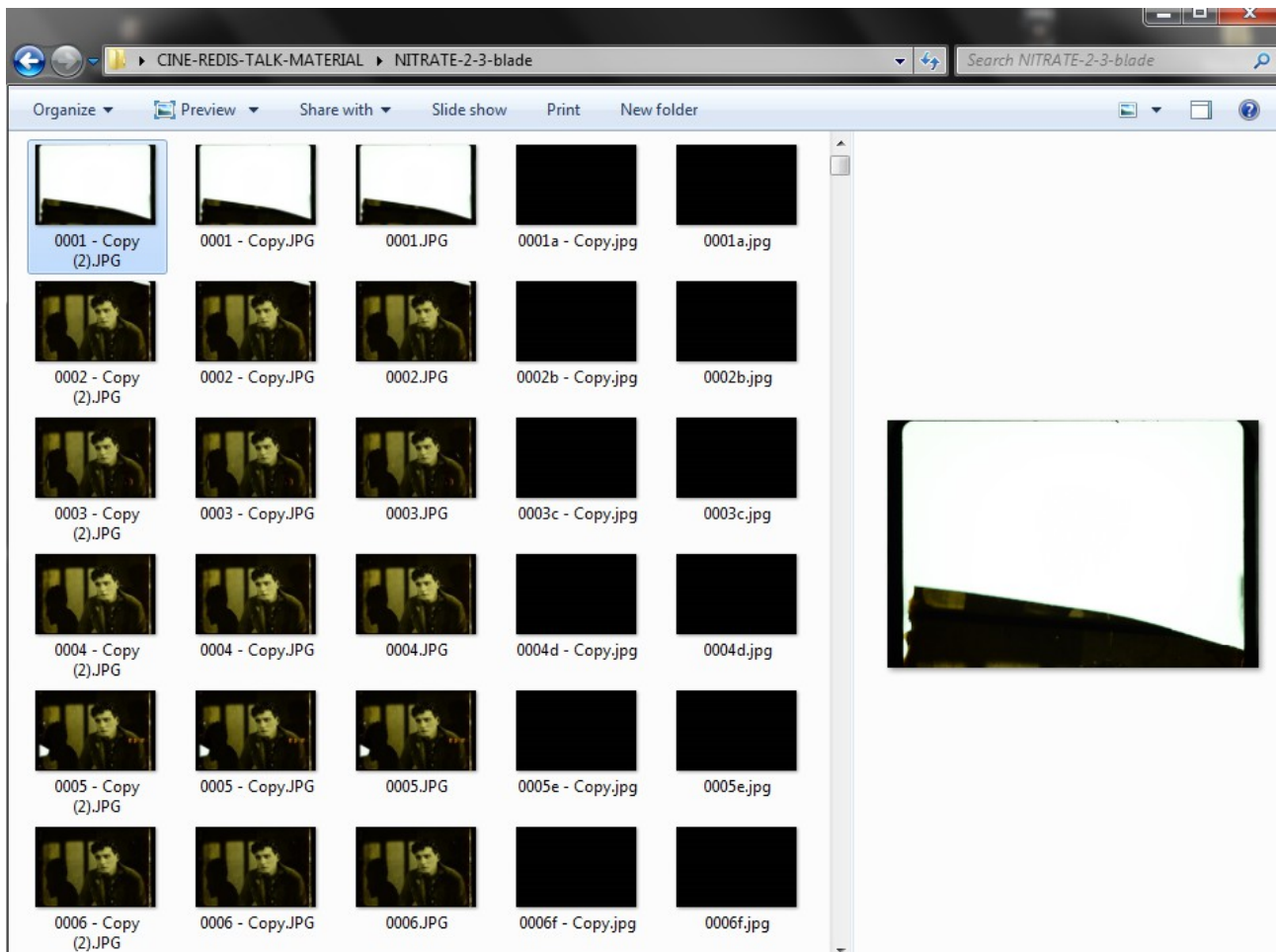


Fig 7

One of the advantages of scanning analogue film material to very high resolution digital stills is that a great many image operations become possible including ones which would be virtually impossible using a photochemical workflow. It is well understood now that digital film restoration is a magic wand for cinema and film heritage. Now is the golden age of such 'restorations' appearing frequently at festivals, in cinemas and as releases on Blu-ray disc. In an experimental archive the focus is more on the question 'does restoration alter or modify the meaning and value of the original film?' To this end a selection of films have been acquired where each one in some way represent or triggers notions of memory or tradition⁶. The plan is to digitise, colour correct, clean and re-present them as 'counter restorations' to test the above question. The practical and logistical undertaking of this is beyond the time limit of this research enquiry but many techniques explored above will be

employed so are considered as preliminary research. The cinema sector is beginning to unlock the potential of digital film restoration to re-enliven films from 'the historical, geographical, and cultural periphery of cinema' even going so far as to say 'Instead of Smashing Icons, Film Restoration F*cks with the Canon' (Heller, 2019)

Me at the Zoo Too

There are two submitted pieces of work that accompany this dissertation. The first one is called 'Me at the Zoo Too'. It is a 35mm colour positive print that lasts approximately 1 minute and twenty seconds. It shows the same piece of video but repeats it and each image configuration is slightly different. The video clip is a transfer of the first historic video media to achieve uploading to Youtube which happened on April 23rd in 2005. The concept of transferring this clip to film is informed by the objective difference between an analogue state and a digital condition and the creative aim of this piece of work is to act as focal point for consideration and meditation on this difference. It is effectively an 'undecidable figure'. It archives the original media that inaugurated Youtube but it cannot, in its analogue form, represent Youtubes context or function, its system. But this absence is referred to or alluded to in a sense by the ubiquity of Youtube, by its pervasive everyday presence. It does not need representing.

Next it arranges the clip into two different configurations the net result of which is a perceivable difference in size of the images. The first time the clip is shown it is very small in the frame. The smallness is the result of it being set in a pixel for pixel ratio within the standardised pixel dimensions of a full 35mm frame excluding soundtrack. This is illustrated in fig 8.

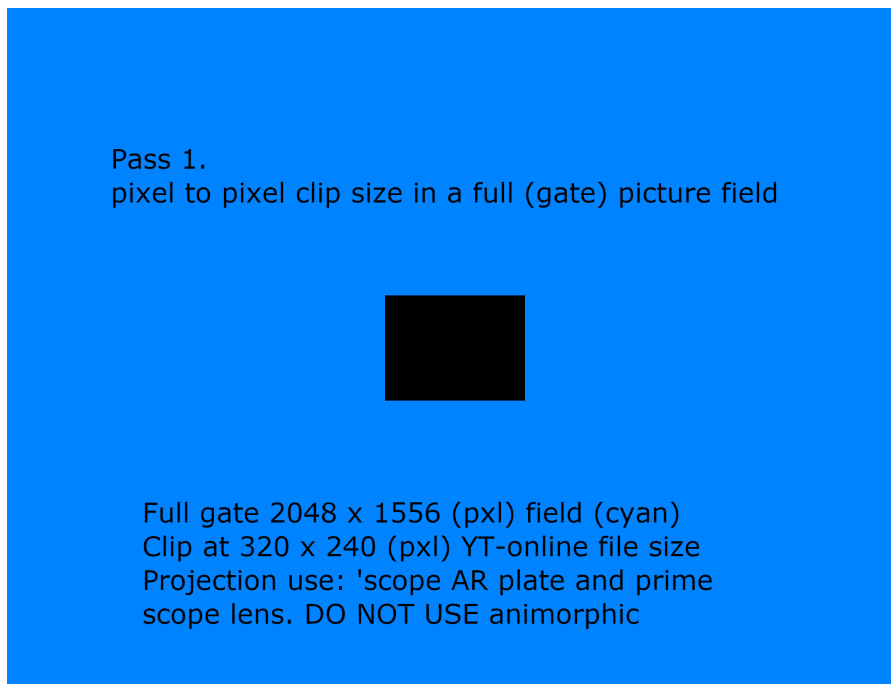


Fig 8

Next, after some titles instructing the projectionist to change format, the image repeats again but is larger as in fig 9 below. The size in this case is based on a rough standard DVD sized image.

In each case the blue area represents the cinema screen. So in the second figure, the grey is not projected. This work attempts do several things.

1. Capture and conserve using tools which are about to die that which has just been born.
2. Engage the film apparatus in some materiological⁷ way that affords commentary on the clip.
As if film was quoting the historic moment portrayed using only the language of its own medium
3. Produce a piece of work both as sculpture, artefact, moving image and performance.

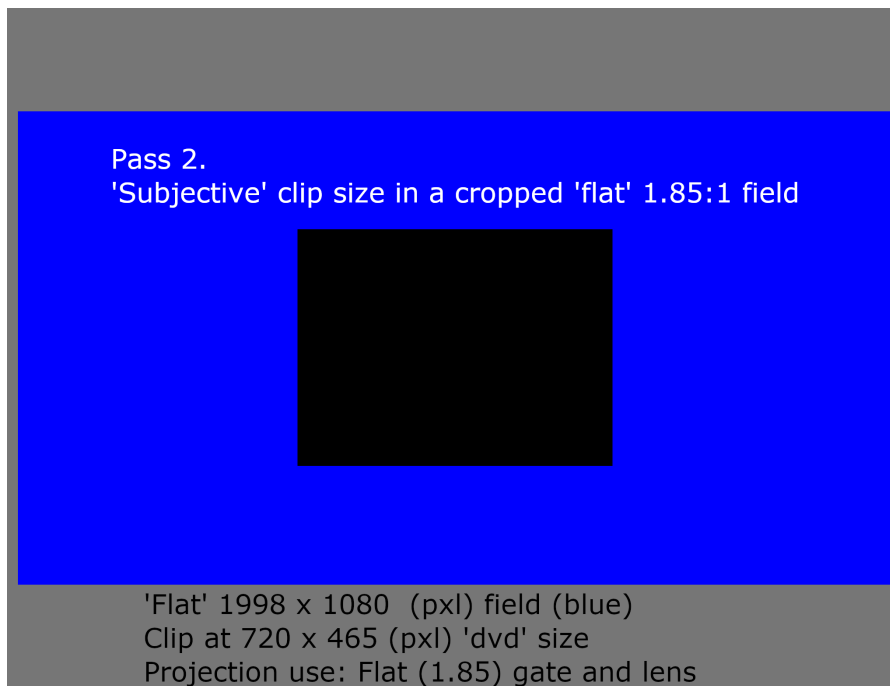


Fig 9

This piece of work is the inaugural object in the archive. Even though the collection already consists of thousands of items, this piece of work signifies the ideal commencing instrument in reference to its depicted content.

B/W filmed segments of 'oneiric' nature. Returning dreams to the dreamers.

The rich source of 16mm films that ebay provides also means something else. It is an archive of the domestic and the private displayed in public. In this light it acts as both a simulacrum for the collective unconscious through the agency of its imagery but also as a material form of this unconscious where untraceable heterogeneous impulses end up as mere relics.

Throughout this process though, when ideas arise out of the textual materials engaged with, most subjects or topics which become focal points for films can be found in peoples houses through ebay. Appendix 2 contains detailed examples of these. But another strategy altogether is the plan to return films to ebay. That is, to use ebay, in all the above senses, as a place to show films. To use ebay as a

platform to display films. Ebay does not have the provision to display moving images and therefore they can only be displayed as artefacts. If a film was to be made that was to return to ebay, a return to the collective unconscious, what would it look like? This is the question that has guided the principles of composition and design of these films. In some ways, the image could be considered arbitrary as the focus, through the limitations of ebay, is on the purely artefactual status of the film strip. However, I have decided upon the use of specifically oneiric imagery that performs a 'masquerade'. Not fake, but potentially not truthful, vague, semantically loose, weird. One historical source of this idea is Malcolm Le Grice's 'Yes, No, Maybe, Maybe not' of (Le Grice, 1967) where he employs a shooting strategy that results in footage that does 'not give itself as definitely not found footage' (Gidal, 2013, p125). This preconceived idea of appealing to chance, with every risk of failure, or lack of uptake conceptually is not vague. It is a complex gesture of 'engaging chance' by leaving things open to possible completion by someone or something else. I take this concept further into the material world of chance by placing footage into the display of ebay, where, beyond my control, other agents might connect with the work.

The figure below (fig 10) shows a negative image in the printer gate before exposure to a positive. A film entitled 'Philosophical Chairs' will be produced that shows several shots of empty chairs and nothing else.

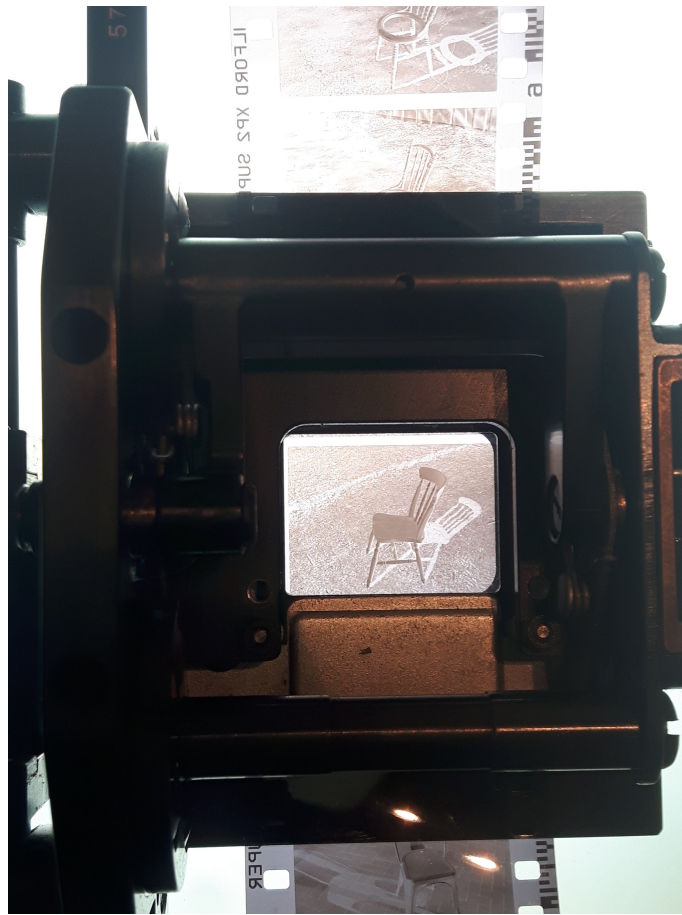


Fig 10

In my process the film series produced for the ebay all reference the fact that they are productions of an archive, namely 'Nachleben Experimental Film Lab and Archive'. This fact appears as a title at the front of each film (see fig 11) where there is a catalogue number indicating it is part of another whole.

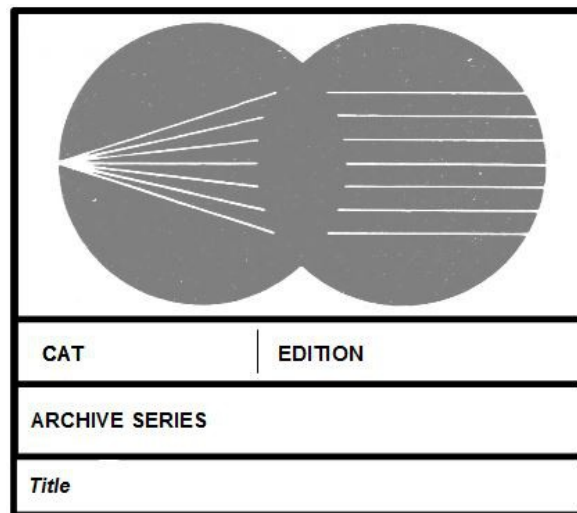


Fig 11 (example, not final title card)

This contextual device is quite important in grounding the series in a way that differs from the free and drifting nature of other extraneous material found online. Of course any particular film sold on Bay still has its context of production, its manufacturer, its studio, its distributor, all intact as data in the form of titles and graphics. Once re-used though, redeployed, re-enlivened and re-visited as in the practice of found footage all these details can disappear or get selected out. Next the title of the film is displayed at the start in a stylistic form and font that references typical films available on eBay (typically Aerial, bold). The title forms a very important function in this project. There is a long tradition or more accurately practice, in Art production, especially conceptual art that exploits the need for an art work to have a title. An entire piece of work can be invoked, developed and contained by its title alone⁸. In the context of my films being sold on eBay the title performs an integral role in drawing attention to the objects.

I keep records of who buys which films, at what cost, and all this is added to the archive in general as record fields that exist for each manufactured film.

Further working examples and preliminary devising of films for this channel of activity are found in Appendix 2.

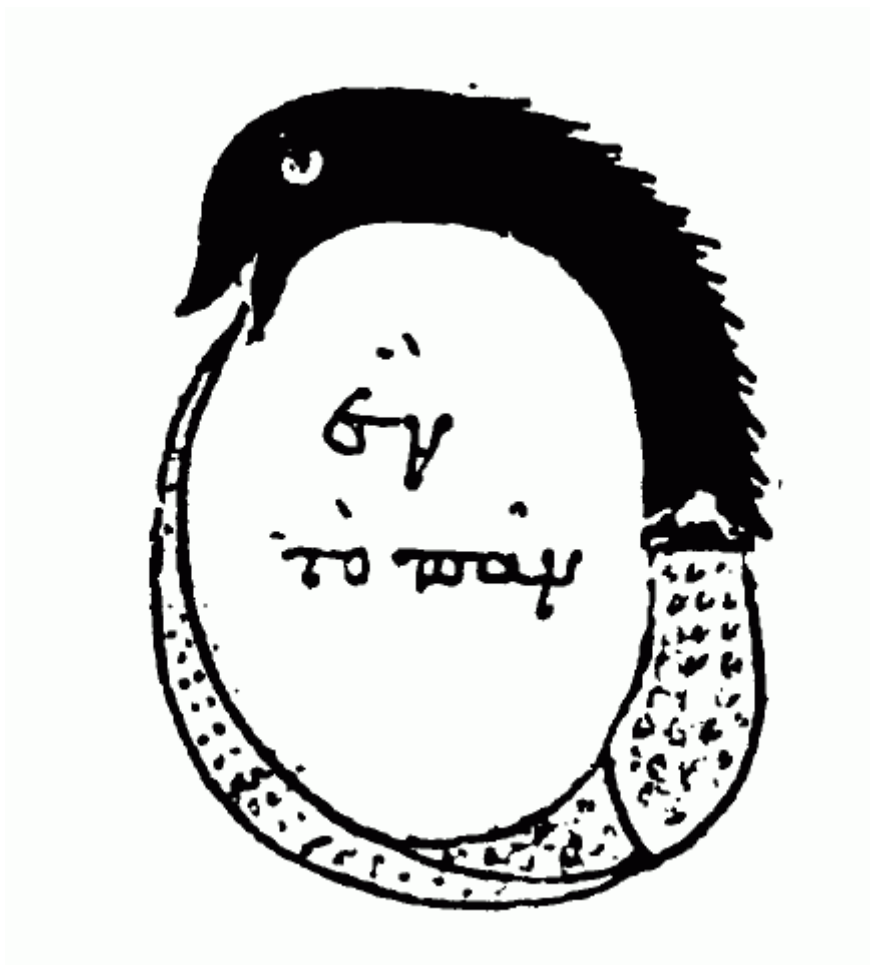


Fig 12. Ouroboros

Youtube is not an archive

Youtube is a media sharing platform. It is NOT an archive because it

- 1) does not preserve media
- 2) alters original media uploads by stripping metadata
- 3) is a corporation that prioritizes profits over cultural heritage

OpenArchive (Twitter 22:01 26th April 2019)⁹

This statement made by a group of software designers who are developing a secure mobile data archive system for human rights and freedom of speech applications barely conceals a definition of the archive. You could say Youtube is not an Elephant because it is not grey and it doesn't have a trunk. Youtube does preserve media. It encodes to its own data and distributes it in a huge database called 'bigtable', that is runs underneath Google. Youtube does not strip metadata because any metadata that uploaded content contains is preserved in the original media that belongs to the user but also Youtube metadata that accompanies any accessioning is readily searchable and forms an integral part of Youtubes service.(McKee, 2011).

Youtube is a commercial enterprise but so are film stock manufacturers and this argument would not work in the context of film archives. I am not making an apology for Youtube. This online, user defined media sharing platform has been responsible for some dubious activity. However, I am suggesting that it should be seen as an emerging experimental archive. The true promise of Youtube, that anyone can upload shareable video content to the internet, gets missed in the OpenArchives comment. Other more politically orientated systems like the Turkish Bakma¹⁰ or the Palestinian rights monitoring site B'Tselem¹¹ perform the same structural function as Youtube; in fact the latter actually uses Youtube media-infrastructure to facilitate their project. The archive status of Youtube is not given by it as an organisation. It is inferred to it by its users.

Youtube is so dense with content now that it is almost a real time immediate archive. But only becoming an archive the moment someone accesses a document or interprets its material exactly as in a traditional archive. The most important distinction to make between analogue and digital archives is the notion of the site or place. Analogue archives must be physically visited by the body even with growing digitisation and thus access.

Digital archives are materiological expressions of internet technology. They permit and create access by the means afforded by the inherent connectivity of this technology. At the centre of this structural ontology is information itself, data, and its material proclivities and bias. It is outside the

scope of my research to comprehensively examine this field on its own terms. This would involve programming code, the material systems of integrated circuits as well as dynamics of network protocols like TCP/IP and others.

The issue of place, or geography is not absent though when considering Youtube or digital archives. Common to most digital archives is their utilisation of devices and connectivity and these will always be subject to geopolitical conditions as can be seen in the idea of the 'four internets' where 'The internet is not a monolithic architecture whose existence and form are guaranteed in perpetuity, but a fragile and contingent construction of hardware, software, standards and databases, governed by a wide range of private and public actors whose behaviour is constrained only by voluntary protocols' (Hall, O'Hara, 2018) In this view the four geopolitical internets are defined by place, being Silicon Valley, Washington DC, Brussels and Beijing, each with a different approach, ideology and political stance towards the internet that is becoming articulated through laws and legislation. A digital archive, when accessed online, will always be operating within a large geopolitical zone and is bound in some fashion to its telecommunications rules.

Archives of the artefact.

In the senses in which I am employing ebay it becomes an archive of artefacts. In its interaction with ebay (or one component of it), the Nachleben experimental archive achivizes the disparate collections within domestic and private spaces, basing its interactions on chance, accident, spontaneity as well as more formal and informed selection criteria like rarity value and preconfigured qualities and properties (collecting Kodachrome for instance). The interpretation of a collection is the enaction of archivality. Herein is a central definition that emerges out of my practice. Ebay is an 'accidental archive'. Youtube, even though its root episteme both contains and expresses the idea of user uploading and sharing of video, can not itself interpret the entirety of its

holdings. It is an archive in structure. An archive with *no* catalogue or ordering. As users and interpretation are radically heterogeneous, it also constitutes an 'accidental archive'. More important for the future might be its code. The written text that constructs and operates it. Where and how this gets archived is another subject.

Analogue archives demand an order of physical management that interlocks the object with the body. The feet for walking, the arms for carrying and handling, the nose for sampling. The accidents and freedoms that arise in analogue archives become intermediated with the digital through the ideation of an experimental archive that is predisposed to both methods equally. Ebay in its non-geographical artefactual traceability, Youtube in its coding of democratic openness. Both are platforms that bring together, arrange and store. "There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside" (Derrida, 1994 p11). In the age of information, everywhere is now the exterior to the interiority of data which is nowhere.

The Camera in the Archive

Both these configurations inform the idea of the 'The Camera In The Archive'. The openness of Youtube is re-thought as the equalising of every object in my collection and the assigning to it of a special random number. This is inspired by 'Bigtable' the database system behind Youtube. Cameras receive catalogue numbers identically to films so cameras should only proceed along the lines of their own implicit materiology which means exposing film to light and chemically developing an image. We grant films the same authority by viewing and watching them and inter-meshing their knowledge with ours. The unconscious heterogeneity of ebay invites the results of this materiology, this exposed film, back into itself closing the loop. Ebay is where films can end up, accidentally or deliberately, to be found again. This is the figure of the Ouroboros again (fig 12).

In the context of this dissertation it serves to illustrate the self reflexivity of the process. The cyclical nature of this process achieves its own individuation by the processes outlined in this research.

The film strip is the snake and where it swallows its tale is the archive. Or, the snake is regurgitating itself, creating itself out of an already formed body. Producing itself from itself but perhaps with an order of modification that has taken into account any changes that have occurred. Most importantly it is both these things simultaneously.

The archive is the operation that renders all its objects into materials to use and employ, enrich by association or cross together into collaboration. For example in my collection are several light meters. In the index card record on these artefacts there is a link to a written text (Nevill, 2018) whose author makes an extended consideration of them as instruments. This is a hyperlink, except its written on a piece of card, the whole printed text another catalogue item. On the index card for the camera called a 'Mitchell / Fries 35R' is information about its provenance that includes the fact that it belonged to Bolex Brothers Animation Studio in Bristol. Likewise the optical printer, cobbled together from Oxberry¹² parts, Neilson-Hordell¹³ parts and specially made parts comes with its own compilation of paperwork and drawings and a growing catalogue not only of uses in other projects but also associative texts, histories and continual enrichment of awareness 'about it'.

I draw from Amanda Egbe's thesis here that 'sketches a media archaeology of the optical printer in order to present a model of thinking of the archive as an instrument or apparatus...' (Egbe, 2017)

The optical printer, being a camera and projector combined, is the site where the past meets the future. In summary, if the optical printer is an object in an experimental archive then its productions, uses, history, repairs, modifications are also the subject of archival study. The same multiplication of meaning is extended to all objects however big or small.

I want to highlight the conflation I make between collection and archive. A critique of conflating the two might suggest that 'a collection is a private or organisation-based initiative to collect objects

and documents that are not legally bound by the authorities' (Lundemo, 2014, p22)

Lundemo's overall archival definition weighs far too heavy on authority, selection and those classic power discourses that serve only a limited class of social contracts or people. A collection can never be experimental. When creatively exploring through the agency of a collection an experimental archive is produced even if it is temporary. The archive is the instrument of the production of meaning, intellectual value or simply expression.

My framing of the artefact as a relic in cultural memory studies is an experimental approach to thinking about the present. The commitment to save old machines , another form of relic, is based on their ability to resist and permit a range of specific things being metal, engineered, adaptable, modifiable. These machines are absolutely necessary to continue producing film based works within a specific material procedure. As objects in an archive they persist as documents that can be interpreted and read and thus their use is not considered written or historicised, at least not completely. It can only be the present use that forms the boundary or limits of their ontological description. Historic uses can not include new uses.

It is also possible now to digitise machines themselves. In the future we may be able to download the 3D printing plans for famous cameras or other devices¹⁴ The ramifications of this are outside the scope of my current research.

The Future

Only two years after Youtube's origination, Karen Gracy insightfully recognised the importance and influence of the coding behind it and the changes it could bring about. She said 'the most crucial change to moving image archives will not necessarily be in regard to the collections themselves, but rather to the social order that sustains cultural institutions.' (Gracy 2007). In an experimental archive the two things are allowed to be the same. Certainly in Youtube we see the distinction being

collapsed, the use and the users are the same thing, and in traditional archives there is no real concept of the gap that exist between the accession date of an item and the period it represents or contains in the record, a gap that has been entirely collapsed in Youtube and any real time database. In contrast, until such time as when people can download my workshop from the internet, they will need to travel in time and space using their bodies and visit the non-digital one.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Having arrived at a satisfactory framework to inform the iteration of ideas what remains is to proliferate them. Archives are almost exclusively post events. That is they exist now after considerable history has passed and serve their purpose whenever and wherever memory is no longer reliable. However, as the Prelinger quote on page 29 urges, it is the archives of the future that may define the times we live in now.

This project has begun slowly to produce such records and this dissertation has played a large part in setting it on its way.

Out of the experimental process that is ostensibly open and flexible comes the need to define and develop and instead of fixing these as written statements it transpired that works themselves could be representative of forms of exposition. Awareness of problems and pitfalls appeared early and helped draw some boundaries around the central activities of the workshop in terms of what was meaningful or useful to include. The archive is a rich concept to draw from and it always seemed important wherever possible to include or mobilise some aspect of the real, tangible collection that I manage so as to limit how much considering the archive became distant from an actual archive.

A diverse range of methods are undertaken in the workshop and the methodology that underpins them is always seeking to encapsulate the freedoms in experimentation. This is especially true when encountering a simple procedure such as arriving at catalogue numbers for items. As chance and unplanned encounters are so central to creative practice it seemed perfectly reasonable to utilise dice in producing unique numerical codes. There is no meaning in these numbers yet we can't help the habit of looking for it.

In many senses this project is an initiation and not a finished process. Creative ideas, interpretations of texts, machine possibilities are all vectors that are held in suspension at the point and time where

they come closest together. They meet and find expression in finished forms and that in essence is the definition of art. Transformations occur to both material, meanings, beliefs, ideas and written words. This dissertation itself is now part of this archive as a record of thinking and thinking (thinking-doing) at a particular moment in time. It also serves as an extended meditation on the principle informing concept of nachleben. It was the ideas of survival and afterlife that first gave rise to the drive to collect and preserve certain tools and moving image forms. The resistance to abandon them too much an obvious concession to cultural and creative conformity.

Cinema hardly features in this project yet, like nachleben, it can be seen in everything. From the very idea of making films with film, to the peculiar attempt at destabilising digital video in order to preserve the flicker of 'the flicks'.

It is my conviction even more so now that the following is true:

Cinema is/was the worlds produced using the tools of analogue motion picture expression.

If they are gone, so too has cinema.

APPENDIX 1

Selected blog posts illustrating activities undertaken in the workshop / archive / lab.

All accessed 21/07/2019 at: <http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer>

Blog titles in bold.

'Waiting in the activity of the decade'

Acquiring new gear, working on old gear, attending a conference.

<http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?p=1821>

'The archive and 'the camera in the archive'

Thinking through some concepts and outlining a creative framework for producing works inside the archive. http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?page_id=1906

'The ghosts of analogue in digital'

Analysing flicker so as to reintroduce it into digital versions.

<http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?p=2195>

'More rotoscoping'

Setting up some printing configurations to be able to film titles and graphics but also a special technique to allow photographing text into the sound track area of the film strip for a specific idea.

<http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?p=2407>

'Real work starts here'

Breaking new ground with a particularly complicated machine.

<http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?p=1721>

2000 year old cinema!

Exploring the concept that bronze age archaeological miniature shields are media.

<http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?p=2323>

Parvo L 35mm camera

Research into some parts I purchased from ebay and their provenance.

<http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?p=1710>

Geometry and orientation

Workings out of film orientations when placed in an optical printer.

<http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?p=1594>

Optical Sound

Documentation of residency at Lab in Rotterdam

http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?page_id=123

APPENDIX 2

Examples of practical ideas for works that arose during the reading/writing process. This involved the sourcing of suitable films to aid realising the ideas and the subsequent purchase of them.

The trace of ideas, how ideas emerge, the process of theory and thinking on creative expressions all form aspects of the production process.

1 The Quattrocento Camera.

Whilst reading 'Techne/Technology' (Van den Oever, 2014) searching for material on definitions, and theories around media archaeology but specifically in Cinema, I found a conversation between Van den Oever and Martin Lefebvre about Christian Metz's archive/collection. In this conversation Lefebvre mentions the attack that Marcelin Pleynet had launched on the apparatus that determines cinema, the camera. (Pleynet, 1969)

He criticised the 'perspectival code directly inherited and constructed on the model of the Quattrocento's scientific perspective' (Lefebvre, and de Oever 2014, p245). His critique was based on the fact that the camera, by its optical – perspectival - projection construction, can only produce bourgeois ideology. That is it can only ever reproduce the dominant value system of the middle classes, that it is aimed at and by.

This triggered an idea. Where would the optical printer feature in this critique? The idea that the optical printer camera is configured to see one thing only is almost a technical law, defined by the conformity of the machine to one normal use function. It is designed to focus on the plane of the film that is held in front of it. And this plane, in some respects is the paper sheet, or the ground glass of the renaissance artists. So this optical camera is also always tied to the Quattrocento view that Pleynet speaks off. It can only duplicate it. But, what happens when this cameras lens is *wider* than

this paper sheet or gate. What happens when we put the *wrong* lens on it, when we break the rules of the machine. If the lens is wide enough we now see the machine and what is around it (fig 13). We also see what is in the gate, the original camera view, the original Quattrocento rendering but also, decisively, a new view of its context. We see the flattened perspectival view and a new view of another perspective. We see the whole machine suddenly in the same way that seeing perforations and sprockets holes was a radical materialist revelation, (Gidal, 1986). An image inside an image but not mise-en-abyme, because we face the new surrounding already one step removed from the perspectival image at its centre. What this image is and how the film can play out the change from one view to another has yet to be devised.



Fig 13

Summarising then by looking again at Marcelin Pleynet's critique of the camera as an instrument that can only reproduce bourgeois ideology by its basic formulation in Quattrocento scientific perspective, I am devising, using the machinery in my workshop, a response to this by exploiting properties of the optical printer which although a type of 'camera' also has a significantly different register and 'non-perspective' potential specifically when it is mis-used as a camera whose subject field is wider than the gate it is usually aimed at. The work would reference Pleynet's historical critique by use of titles or credits for example it maybe entitled 'The Eurocentric Camera's Last Breath in the Century of Man Made Global Atrocities'. This is a 'wish to enliven an inheritance, to enter a constructive relationship with the past in our (discursive) present and work towards an imagined future' (Ballhausen,, 2013, p20) by employing the agency of the film to both engage with an historic idea and subvert/counter/contain its different readings and manifestations through time.

2. Jean Epstein

Reading Jean Epstein's important book 'The Intelligence of a Machine' (Epstein, trans Wall-Romana, 2014) is an enriching exercise for any film maker replete as it is with poetic metaphysical incitements about what film is and could be.

My reading caused me to stop at one passage with a complete idea almost fully formed in my mind.

On page 18 the section is headed 'The Time-Thinking Machine' (Wall-Romana, 2014, p18) that begins:

“Another astounding merit of the cinematograph is that it multiplies and immensely softens the play of temporal perspective, training the mind for a gymnastics that isn't always easy: switching from an inveterate absolute to unstable conditionals.”

Two things sprang to mind. One, I could print this text, one word or character per frame into the optical sound area on the film strip. This image, when run past the sound decoder would produce

noise but at this stage it would be impossible to know what this would sound like. If the film were viewed manually, one could read the text, (see fig 14).

Next, based on the image of gymnastics, I searched ebay for this subject and found and purchased an old film that has footage of aerialists and acrobats performing, (see fig 14).

In the optical printer, once I have a 'score' based on the words and which frames they occupy, I could loop and freeze, speed up or slow down the performers all as Epstein's text so provocatively describes. The words, amounting to about 150, would only last 6 seconds, so some means would need to be devised to lengthen and prolong or stretch the film. Perhaps have it in English and French. Perhaps several languages. If there is a clear rhythm or musicality to the sound perhaps repeat it over and over, emphasising different words by using the image as punctuation.

Again the process is followed whereby an historical text (Epstein) informs a present idea (optically printing and manipulating an extant film of gymnastics) which then, once released into the world, takes part in forming an as yet unformed future (appearance through eBay and the internet).

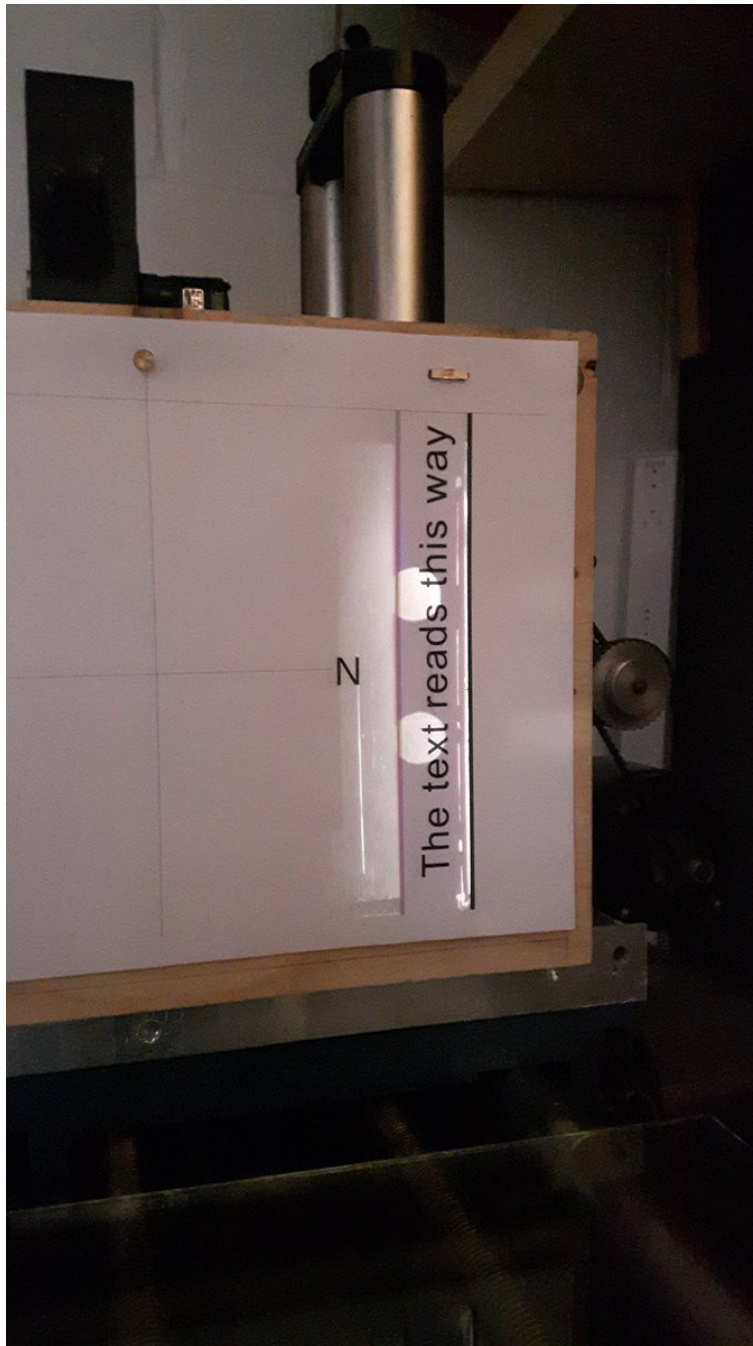


Fig 14

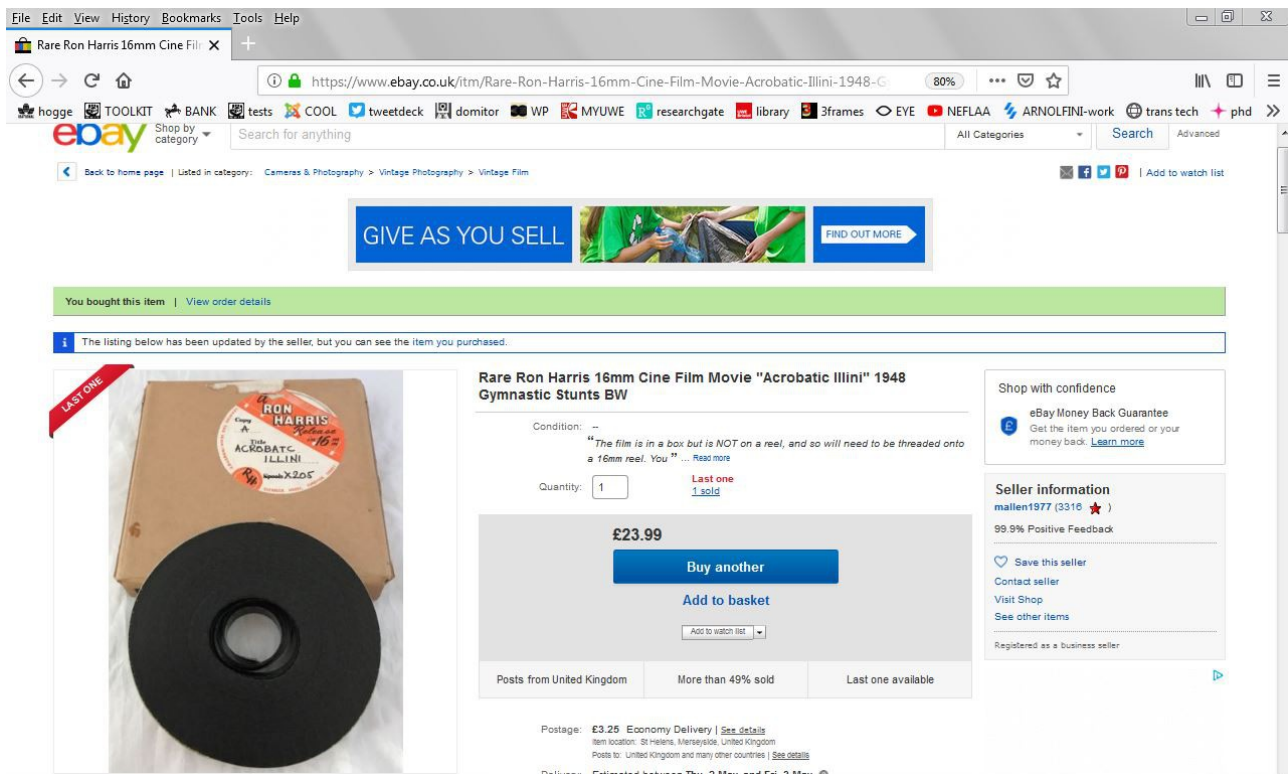


fig 15

3 Remembering the Elephant.

Inspired to do something in response to the narrative of extinction I considered making a film homage to a species likely to be extinct and to this end purchased a film about the Rhino. My idea was to re-photograph this film using the optical printer, slowing scenes down, freezing on the animals, etc. The title would be 'Remembering The Rhino' and the concept is that it is a b/w film from the future not the past. Or, in the future, as such time as when the animals are finally gone, it would serve as a memory of the Rhino, however diminished or faded.

As I was working on the 'Me at the Zoo Too' film piece which features Elephants I realised the Elephant would be a much more iconic, emblematically emotive creature to give this treatment to. At the same time as this I was working as a technician at an international wildlife film festival (Wildscreen 2014, 2015, 2017) and was struck quite deeply by the casual professional view held by attendees that Elephants will be extinct. Elephants are going to be extinct was a phrase I heard

often.

Saddened by this prospect I searched ebay and found two 16mm films about Elephants (see fig 15)
The idea is the same as for the Rhino. A film that looks, re-looks, freezes, slows down, contemplates
and performs a memorialising meditation on this creature, in the frame of looking back,
remembering all via processes afforded by the optical printer. 'Remembering The Elephant' will
appear as an artefact on 16mm on ebay, at a time when Elephants are still alive echoing the strange,
accidental and background appearance of Elephants in the inaugural Youtube clip 'Me at the Zoo'.

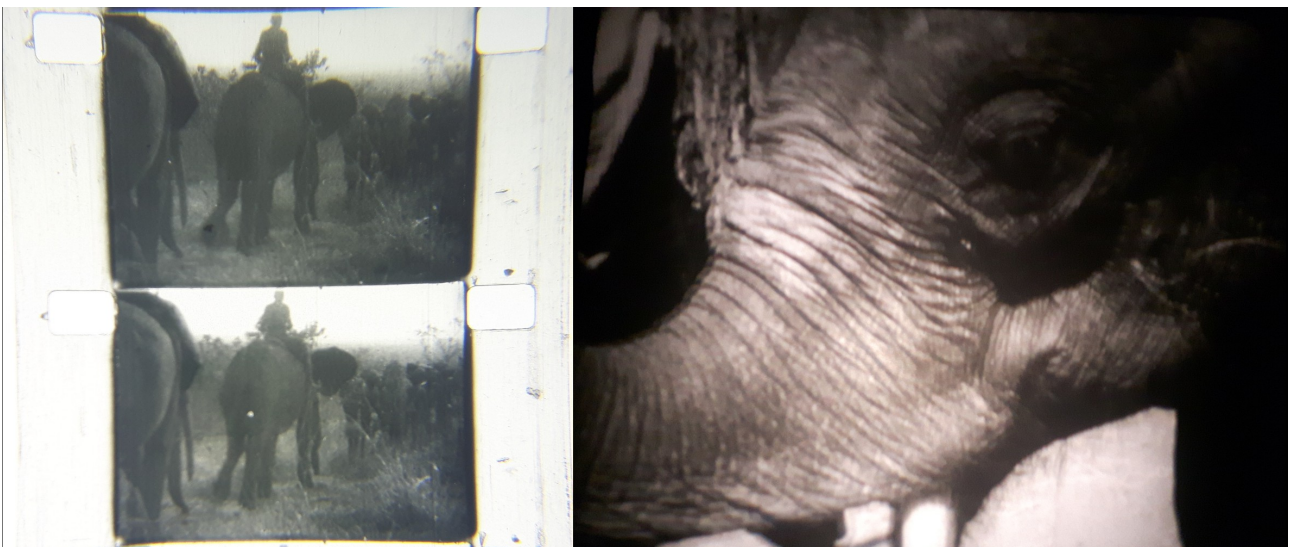


Fig 16

APPENDIX 3

Projectionist Instructions to accompany the film work

'Me at the Zoo Too'

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROJECTIONIST

Dear Projectionist.

This 35mm film is very short consisting of the same 19 second sequence repeated twice. The whole reel runs for about 2 minutes. However there needs to be a pause in projection between the clips to change the format. Part of the 'performance' of the work is the work of the projectionist as they stop, change format, re-lace and restart the film.

1.

The first section of the film including the titles must be shown with a **Cinemascope** gate or aperture plate BUT WITHOUT THE ANIMORPHIC ADAPTER and with the correct backing/prime lens to give the biggest possible image. In fact this format is the Fox Movietone format that uses a pre animorphic frame area with aspect ratio about 1.19:1 which is very square. However the image projected consists of a very large amount of black with a tiny image in the middle. This sized image represents a fairly accurate pixel for pixel 'comparison' of the original video clips actual size of 320 x 240 pixels within a 2K full gate area. So what we are seeing is the size of the first uploaded Youtube video clip in comparison to a 'Cinema' image field.

2.

When this clip finishes and the 'PAUSE PROJECTION' title is seen you can stop the machine and change the gates. If your projection system is equipped to run an auto changeover you can activate this during the title card which lasts about 6 seconds. If you need to make manual changes of both gate and lens you must do this now. The title card text has been framed by a white border to aid the lacing of it correctly into the gate. When you start the projection again you can use the remaining text to focus. All this visual 'trace' of your work is an important component of the work.

During this time you should also make the necessary screen masking changes.

3.

The next clip is printed onto the film differently even though it is exactly the same video sequence. The correct format to now use is **'flat' or widescreen 1.85:1**. The normally cropped film frame is now grey (visible if you manually inspect the film) and the image sits in a black border as before. This time the image is sized to represent the standard DVD dimension of 720 x 576 within the common cinema frame of widescreen 1.85:1. The outcome of this arrangement is that the image is now noticeably larger. The clip is followed by a short end title.

4.

The cyan sound track is mono and the Dolby Mono mode 01 should be selected if it doesn't auto select. If you lace the head of the film using frames in the leader area you may start the projection immediately, i.e. open the dowsers as soon as the machine is at speed. After the SMPTE leader which I'd like to be visible on screen if possible is a section of black before the first title. In the middle of this black somewhere is a single frame of a QR code with a 2300hz 'pip' in sync with it. This QR code offers an html URL link to the website of the artist.

The clip is a copy of the first Youtube clip that was ever uploaded. This happened on the 23rd April

2005. At the time of preparing this film version (Summer 2019) the original clip has had 72 million views on Youtube. This work represents film as a technology making comment on the idea of user uploaded and shared networked video by framing it within the language of some of its own materiological parameters and by preserving it on film itself. At the current time is is likely that this film record will outlive Elephants as a species.

I'd like to thank you personally for taking the time to handle and present this work properly.

Graeme Hogg (Summer 2019)

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- 1 'Cinema is/was the worlds produced using the tools of analogue motion picture expression'. Published on http://www.nachleben.org.uk/skomer/?page_id=1278. Accessed 29/08/2019. This is my personal definition.
- 2 Archive/Counter-Archive (A/CA): Activating Canada's Moving Image Heritage is a six-year research-creation project focusing on works by women, Indigenous Peoples, the LGBTQ+ community, and immigrant communities.
- 3 In almost every large film archive donor contracts and terms and agreements define, limit and shape almost every object. A class of film holding, the orphan, is a kind of object with no clear owner, copyright source or clear author.
- 4 The serpent depicted eating its own tail meaning 'The all is one', <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ouroboros>
- 5 <http://www.nachleben.org.uk>
- 6 Art of the Bowman and Dream of Wild Horses to name two.
- 7 I argue for the use of the word materiological over material when the former acknowledges that implicit dispositions can be present in complex things and thus emerge from them as opposed to a mere physical end trace as the totality of prior influences dictate as in material.
- 8 An Oak Tree, Michael Craig-Martin, 1973.
- 9 OpenArchive develop software for secure encryption and archiving of mobile data.
- 10 <http://www.Bakma.tr> no longer exists. Bakma means 'Don't Look' in Turkish. It was a user populated online video share platform that was set up to allow citizens to upload video footage of government abuses of human rights during the Turkish 2013 uprisings and protests.
- 11 <https://www.btselem.org/> exists to represent the daily occurrences of harassment of Palestinians by Israel.
- 12 Oxberry were an American cinema engineering company known for rostrum or animation stands.
- 13 A British cinema engineering company who specialised in animation equipment.
- 14 See <http://media-heritage.org/index.php/25-3d-do-it-yourself-building-plan-for-a-lumiere-cinematopgraphe>