Final Seminar
PhD candidate: Marc Johnson
Date: 2025-04-16

Plan for making public and archiving

Artistic results

Year	Title	Archived item(s)
2021	Control Unit	1 digital colour video with sound
2021	Answering Machines	96 digital colour videos with sound
2022	@P0liceP0lice	1 twitter archive ZIP file containing 6701 files and 20 folders
2022	Frankenstein (After Whale)	1 digital colour video with sound
2022	Winnie the Pooh is No Longer Safe	80 digital colour photographs
2023	As an Anthropologist in a Prisoner of War Camp (After Pöch)	2 HTML links Internet Shortcut (.url)
2023	A Whale of a Tale	1 digital colour video without sound
2023	Autoimmune	1 digital colour video without sound
2023	Riot/Uprising	1 digital colour video with sound
2024	The Sea is History	30 digital colour photographs
2024	Sunsum	11 digital colour photographs
2025	Poem Johnson brain emulation	1 ZIP file containing 9 files
2025	The Poem Johnson PhD Papers	1 book + 1 digital .pdf file

Documentation

The documentation has been wrapped inside the artistic results in the form of an artist book.
[Download the book](#)

## Short description of artistic results

Weblink to video sample
Control Unit (2021) is a digital colour video with sound that reassembles archival footage from The Freedom Archives, centering on the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML) and its resistance to control unit prisons from 1985 to 2000. Through edited recordings of political prisoners, including Sekou Odinga, and women incarcerated in Lexington, the work examines sensory deprivation, systemic racism, and the politics of confinement. By re-editing these materials, *Control Unit* offers a critical engagement with the history of incarceration and explores how archival film can serve as a tool for reclaiming suppressed narratives.

Weblink to folder
Answering Machines (2021) is a series of 96 digital colour videos with sound, featuring Amazon Mechanical Turk workers performing a simple scripted task: to record an answering machine message while making a defiant hand gesture. Each participant interprets the instruction individually, introducing variations that underscore the personal dimensions of outsourced labor. The series examines the commodification of human action in digital marketplaces, highlighting the tension between impersonal automation and individual expression. By foregrounding this micro-performance, *Answering Machines* draws attention to the fragmented, anonymous conditions of digital labor and the systems that render its workers functionally invisible.
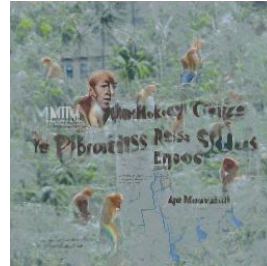
Weblink to archive (Open "your archive.html" file in a web browser after you have downloaded the folder itself on your own computer)
@P0liceP0lice (2022) is an algorithmic artwork in the form of a Twitter bot that operated over a 500-day period, generating AI-based texts and images. Framed as a fictional art historian, the bot posted daily satirical messages that used humor and criticism to reflect on curatorial authority and archival appraisal practices. The intervention was staged in response to Documenta 15, using digital tools to examine how power shapes what is remembered or excluded in cultural narratives. The intervention offered a sustained reflection on how institutional power and appraisal mechanisms determine the visibility of cultural memory.

Weblink to video sample
Frankenstein (After Whale) (2022) is an experimental film that uses a face anonymization algorithm on James Whale's Frankenstein (1931). The software detects and replaces all visible faces while keeping the visual structure of the original intact. The artistic intervention tests how this algorithm performs on moving images and touches on ethical questions related to face recognition and artificial intelligence. As a technical and artistic trial, the work looks at what happens when anonymization tools are applied to a well-known film.

Weblink to photographs

Winnie the Pooh is No Longer Safe (2022) is a slide projection of 80 anonymized photographs sourced from the Xinjiang Police Files, a set of leaked documents detailing conditions in China's internment camps. Using a generative adversarial network, the artist modified facial data to preserve individual privacy while retaining the documentary impact. The project engages with questions of surveillance, censorship, and the ethics of representation in politically sensitive material. Framed around the case of Documented abuses in Xinjiang, the work reflects on how visibility, anonymity, and image circulation shape the boundaries of artistic and journalistic responsibility.

Weblink to sample
https://www.mediathek.at/atom/1AF99DD3-226-00088-00000E10-1AF90336
https://www.mediathek.at/atom/1AF99DDC-16E-0008A-00000E10-1AF90336

As an Anthropologist in a Prisoner of War Camp (After Pöch) (2023) is a digital colour video without sound that reinterprets Rudolf Pöch's 1915 ethnographic film documenting prisoner-of-war camps during World War I. Drawing on visual anthropology and archival critique, the work reframes the original footage—showing the creation of plaster head casts—as a study in carceral visuality and scientific objectification. By treating the film as a ready-made, the project exposes the ideological structures of racial classification and forced documentation. It questions the presumed neutrality of early anthropological cinema and situates the archive as a site of historical construction and institutional power.


Weblink to video sample

A Whale of a Tale (2023) is a digital colour video without sound that reworks archival footage of the whaling industry in South Georgia from the 1920s using techniques such as slowed frame rates, repetition, and reframing. The film interrogates how historical film records have shaped narratives of industrial activity and ecological transformation. Drawing on experimental cinema methods, it treats archival images as material open to re-interpretation, prompting reflection on the visual construction of labor, resource extraction, and the mediated memory of environmental histories. A two-channel video version of the film was also produced, titled *Autoimmune* (2023).
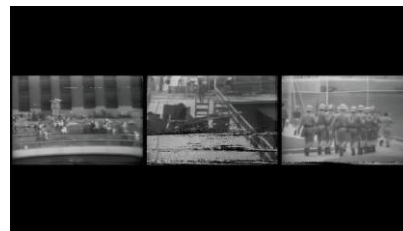
Weblink to video sample

Riot/Uprising (2023) is a three-channel digital colour video with sound that re-edits archival footage of the 1971 Attica prison uprising, sourced from the New York State Archives. Through parallel montage, glitch aesthetics, and an unpolished editing style, the work foregrounds the asymmetry between the incarcerated and those documenting them. Emphasizing the materiality and obsolescence of video itself, The artwork exposes the constructed nature of archival records and the role of mediation in shaping public memory. By disrupting conventional narrative structures, *Riot/Uprising* invites viewers to reflect on state violence, resistance, and the politics of historical representation.
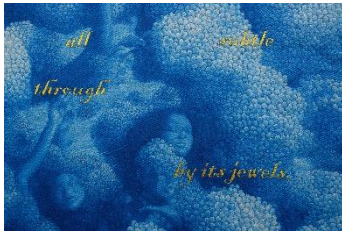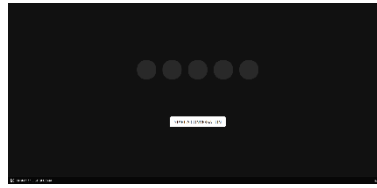
Weblink to documentation

The Sea is History (2024) is a textile series that reflects on memory, displacement, and the ocean as a living archive of the African diaspora. Woven using Jacquard techniques with cotton, wool, and polyester, the works feature allegorical figures and mythological hybrids that explore entanglements between human and natural histories. Drawing inspiration from Derek Walcott's 1979 poem of the same name, the series engages Afrosurrealist and Afrofuturist frameworks to reconsider historical narrative, postcolonial identity, and the politics of cultural remembrance by integrating poetic text into woven form.

Weblink to artwork

Poem Johnson: Brain Emulation (2025) is a voice-based, real-time artwork that allows audiences to engage in live phone conversations with an artificial voice agent modeled on the artist. Developed from the artist's own archive of writings, including essays, notes, and personal texts, the system performs a responsive, improvisational persona. Trained during Johnson's lifetime, the emulation does not imitate but recomposes fragments of language into new dialogues. Framing voice as a site of memory and presence, the work explores authorship, posthumous agency, and the shifting boundaries between archive, identity, and machine.

Weblink to documentation

"Sunsum" (2024) is an iterative dance performance conceived as both research and rehearsal project. It explores the roots and routes of various Afrodiasporic dance forms. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the dancers gather and compose materials, periodically performing to expose their process and findings in a palimpsest of embodied archives. The title "Sunsum" references the poem "Red Rising" by Kamau Brathwaite (1930-2020), wherein he uses the word "sunsum" from the Akan language of Ghana, meaning soul or the origin of spiritual life.

Interactive audio guide

Note to the Reader

The documented artistic research project "The Poem Johnson PhD Papers" can also be explored through an interactive audio guide. When accessed, the guide allows you to engage in a live phone conversation with a voice-based agent representing the deceased artist Poem Johnson (1986-2088).

This is not a chatbot or memorial, but a continuation of the artistic research itself. You are invited to call, listen, and engage with an archive that speaks.

A rehearsal of thought.

A fiction that responds.

[Connect to Poem Johnson brain emulation](#)

https://low-latency-workspace-1ewvo1.sandbox.livekit.io/

The Introduction presents the conceptual and methodological framework of the artistic research project "The Poem Johnson PhD Papers" that critically examines the archive as both institutional practice and epistemological structure. Addressing recent developments in critical archival studies, the text situates the archive as a site of power that shapes historical knowledge through processes of selection, exclusion, and preservation. The project adopts counter-historical and material strategies—including film, textile, performance, poetry, AI agent and artist book formats—to interrogate archival logics and produce alternative historiographic models. Emphasis is placed on restaging, recontextualization, and experimentation as a means to expand the interpretive scope of archival documents.

TO THE READER: PREPARE FOR THE PAST

Along/Against the archival grain

This artistic research project concerns itself with *the archive*; not simply with specific archives (institutions or documents), but rather with *the archive* as a *modus operandi*.[1] The enquiry proceeds through experiments with archival documents and processes. The experiments entail various forms of intervention upon existing records but also include an experiment with a fictionalized repository. The research task is to test the limits and problematize some of the operational logics of *the archive.* This foreword offers the background of the research project in relationship to existing scholarship and artworks, and briefly summarizes the research contribution.

Understanding the dual role of the archive

To define the logic of *the archive*, I first look at how state Archives have defined themselves. The Society of American Archivists report that archives refer to collections of records, both physical and digital, that are preserved due to their long-term value for entities such as individuals, organizations, and governments, encompassing a wide range such as letters, photographs, and official documents. The word "archives" also denotes the building or space where archival materials are stored, known as the archival repository. An Archive, as an institution (often denoted with a capital "A"), is responsible for the preservation and management of these records, affecting cities, businesses, universities, and other communities by maintaining their documentary heritage. Archivists are professionals tasked with the assessment, organization, preservation, and facilitation of access to these archives, serving a crucial role in information management, historical research, and the protection of collective memory and rights.[2]

The logic of Archives and their mode of operating are defined as "core archival functions."[3] These core functions encompass acquisition and appraisal; processing, controlling, and promoting the use of archives; and public service. The preservation of the original order of records (Respect des fonds) and their chain of custody (Provenance) create the sanctity of Archives. A critical point to mention is that these functions remove material from circulation and exposure to change, ensuring its stability as an unalterable record for reliable evidence, historical accountability, and future research.

However, this traditional understanding of archives, as neutral repositories of historical truth is contested. Caswell, Punzalan, and Sangwand illuminate this shift in "Critical Archival Studies: An Introduction,"[4] where they emphasize the dual role of archives as tools for both oppression and liberation. They argue that recent scholarship critically interrogates the role of archives in either perpetuating social injustice or fostering reconciliation and empowerment, particularly within marginalized communities. This view challenges the conventional roles of archives, suggesting that they do more than preserve cultural heritage—they also shape cultural and political discourses, often in ways that reflect and reinforce dominant power structures.

To mention a famous example of archival processes wrapped in pseudoscientific truth, circa 1893, in Paris, Alphonse Bertillon elaborated a system to identify criminals based on recording photographic analogue mug shots enhanced by a set of arbitrary written physical characteristics (physiognomy);

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[1] modus operandi (n.) "way of doing or accomplishing," 1650s, Latin, literally "mode of operating" (see *modus*). modus (n.) "way in which anything is done," 1640s, from Latin modus (plural modi) "measure, extent, quantity; proper measure, rhythm, song; a way, manner, fashion, style," from PIE root *med- "take appropriate measures." Especially in *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*.

[2] Society of American Archivists, "What Are Archives?," www2.archivists.org, accessed July 3, 2024, https://www2.archivists.org/about-archives.

[3] Society of American Archivists, "Core Archival Functions," www2.archivists.org, September 12, 2016, https://www2.archivists.org/node/14804.

[4] Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand, "Critical Archival Studies: An Introduction," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (June 27, 2017), https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.50.

supposed to capture the ultimate criminal type.[5] Each card (*observations anthropométriques*) was ordered and placed within a filling cabinet for future research. Behind this invention for use by the French Police lies a campaign for control over the population. Later in 1976, Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, coined the term "bio-power" to define "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era […].[6]

Alphonse Bertillon, Filling cabinet, « fichiers du Service de l'identité judiciaire », Box n°1, document: FRAPP_YB1_048, circa 1950.

In her insightful book *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia*,[7] Michelle Caswell explores the nuanced role of archiving practices in shaping collective memory, specifically through the example of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Caswell critically examines how the photographs of prisoners, originally taken by the Khmer Rouge at Tuol Sleng prison for documentation, were later displayed in the museum with minimal contextual information. This manner of presentation effectively strips the images of their detailed historical backdrop and individual narratives, transforming victims into abstract symbols of suffering. Caswell argues that such decontextualization can lead to a dilution of the atrocities committed, thereby impacting how history is remembered and understood. Through her work, Caswell underscores the profound responsibility of archivists in curating archives not just for preservation but also for truthful and comprehensive historical education, ensuring that archival practices do not contribute to the erasure or alteration of historical truth.

Elsewhere, the *Canadian Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals* shed light on how selective archival retention policies significantly impacted historical narratives and suppressed certain histories. For instance, the report revealed that critical immigration and citizenship documents were

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[5] Christian Phéline, *L'image Accusatrice* (Laplume, France : Association de critique contemporaine en photographie, 1985).

[6] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, Random House, Inc., 1978).

[7] Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison, Wisconsin : The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

destroyed under routine policies, rendering vital evidence largely unavailable for revoking citizenship of, or deporting Nazi war criminals. Such archival omissions effectively obscured the historical record and hindered accountability for war crimes, thereby shaping the collective memory and historical consciousness in ways that compromised crucial aspects of justice and truth.[8]

The archival principle aims to neutralize subjectivity in how documents and artifacts are treated and considered, promoting a semblance of objectivity in the aggregation of records. However, the ideological underpinnings of what is chosen to be preserved reveal inherent biases, often reflective of dominant cultural narratives. This selective process of memory-making reflects larger socio-political directives and preferences, thereby framing historical knowledge within specific confines. As Jacques Derrida mentioned "there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation."[9]

These examples underscore the dual role of archives as both guardians and gatekeepers of history, revealing a dynamic interplay between power and protection within archival practices. While archives serve as critical resources for historians and the public, they also reflect the cultural, social, and political currents of their times. This inherent tension highlights archives as active, evolving entities, rather than neutral repositories. They are crucial for safeguarding collective memory and facilitating historical research, yet they also possess the authority to shape narratives and influence public perception. Thus, the archival endeavor is a complex mechanism that continually interacts with and reshapes our understanding of the past, present, and future.

Debates at the intersection of archival studies and contemporary art

Substantial literature and a wide field of artistic practices engage with questions of the archive.[10] Many artists and scholars examine and perform archival practices, often excavating the colonial legacies of empires. Through often research-based practices,[11] they expose the blind spots, holes, and fragments of institutional collections. They investigate the ways in which photography, anthropology, and national archives produce and reproduce images of exclusion and cultural othering. Decades of scholarship requalifies the Western colonial Archives as amnesia-making machines.[12] Such machines inscribe as much as they erase (appraisal is the most powerful archival function, as it determines who gets in and who is left out). This is the theoretical base for our investigation.

Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi's filmic works, such as *From the Pole to the Equator* (1986) and *Images d'Orient, tourisme vandale* (2001), exemplify how archival materials can be

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[8] Jules Deschênes et al., "Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals Report. Part I: Public," Government of Canada Publications (Ottawa, Canada: Privy Council Office Information Systems and Services, December 30, 1986), http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/471452/publication.html. For a comprehensive analysis of this case see: Terry Cook, "'A Monumental Blunder': The Destruction of Records on Nazi War Criminals in Canada.," in *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society*, ed. Richard J Cox and David A. Wallace (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2002), 37–65.

[9] Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 10.

[10] Ingrid. Schaffner and Matthias Winzen, *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art* (München: Prestel, 1998); Hans Ulrich Obrist et al., eds., *Interarchive: archivarische Praktiken und Handlungsräume im zeitgenössischen Kunstfeld (Interarchive. Archival practices and sites in the Contemporary Art Field)* (Köln: Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg & Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2002); Anthony Downey, ed., *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*, 1st ed., Ibraaz Series (London: I.B. Tauris, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); Sara Callahan, *Art Archive: Understanding the Archival Turn in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022).

[11] Mark Godfrey, "The Artist as Historian," *October*, no. 120 (April 1, 2007): 140–72, https://doi.org/10.1162/octo.2007.120.1.140.

[12] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995; Cook, Terry. "What Is Past Is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift." *Archivaria*, no. 43 (February 1997): 17–63; Carter, Rodney G. S. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria*, September 25, 2006, 215–33; Flinn, Andrew, and Mary Stevens. "'It Is Noh Mistri, Wi Mekin Histri.' Telling Our Own Story: Independent and Community Archives in the UK, Challenging and Subverting the Mainstream." In *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, edited by Ben Alexander and Jeannette A. Bastian, 3–28. Facet, 2009; Caswell, Michelle. *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014.

transformed to critically engage with historical narratives. Their work involves elaborately reworking found footage to critique colonial and imperial attitudes perpetuated through visual media. In *Images d'Orient, tourisme vandale*, they dissect and repurpose footage from the colonial era in India, highlighting Western attitudes of domination by altering the film's speed, color, and frame to draw attention to the subtle cues of imperial arrogance and oppression embedded within these "exotic" depictions. Similarly, *From the Pole to the Equator* utilizes early 20th-century footage to expose the imperial nature of photography and cinema, illustrating how the moving image served as a tool for objectifying and dominating colonized cultures. Their work not only scrutinizes the content but also the form, showing how the very act of filming is complicit in the structures of power and control, thus providing a profound critique of archival sources as instruments of colonial legacy.

Fred Wilson's seminal installation *Mining the Museum* (1994), exposed at The Contemporary Museum in Baltimore,[13] exemplifies an impactful artistic critique of traditional archival and display practices. By juxtaposing and recontextualizing objects from the Maryland Historical Society's collection, Wilson exposed racial and historical biases inherent within these institutional narratives. His method of placing slave shackles next to elegant silverware and pairing a whipping post with antique furniture disrupted conventional museum narratives, compelling visitors to confront the intertwined histories of racism and colonialism often omitted in museum displays. Wilson's intervention challenged the neutrality of museum presentations and demonstrated the power of curatorial strategies to reshape historical understanding and stimulate critical engagement.

Theaster Gates' *Stony Island Arts Bank* revitalization project (2015)[14] in Chicago encapsulates an innovative approach to reimagining archival and community space. This project transformed a derelict bank building into a cultural hub that both houses new art installations and serves as a repository for African American history and culture. Gates' initiative repurposes the traditional concept of an archive and a museum by integrating community engagement with the preservation of cultural heritage. The *Arts Bank* archives include a wide array of materials, from slides of the Johnson Publishing Archive to Frankie Knuckles' vinyl records, representing a dynamic fusion of historical and recent African American cultural expressions. This endeavor powerfully demonstrates how architectural and cultural restoration intertwined with community involvement can reinvent the archival space, making history accessible, activated, and relevant to local communities.

Brook Andrew's theatrical work *GABAN* (2022), performed in the Art Gallery of New South Wales (Australia), uniquely leverages the museum space to reframe and challenge dominant colonial narratives through an Indigenous lens. *GABAN*, a Wiradjuri term meaning "strange,"[15] reflects the disorienting museum experience for many Indigenous peoples. The play depicts personified cultural objects from colonial collections interacting with characters representing institutional powers, engaging in dialogues about amnesia, violence, repatriation, and revenge. The narrative reawakening of ancestral memories critically exposes how museums have historically enacted and sustained colonial dominance, offering a powerful and healing reclamation of Indigenous stories and perspectives.

In addressing the limitations and biases of traditional archival practices, particularly the selective digitization that prioritizes colonial narratives, artists like Stephanie Syjuco take novel approaches that offer compelling counter-narratives.[16] Syjuco's *Rogue Finding Aid* (2023) directly challenges the conventional archival framework by creating an independent, parallel archive focused on the visual representation of Filipinx Americans—a group historically marginalized in mainstream archival

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[13] Fred Wilson et al., *Mining the Museum: An Installation*, ed. Lisa Graziose Corrin (Baltimore: The Contemporary (Museum) of Baltimore, 1994).

[14] The building was acquired in 2012 by the Rebuild Foundation (founded by the artist) and reopened to the public in 2015.

[15] Budi Miller, "Brook Andrew: GABAN", The National 4: Australian Art Now (Biennale), 2022, https://www.the-national.com.au/artists/brook-andrew/gaban/.

[16] Stephanie Syjuco, Astria Suparak, and Carmen Winant, *Stephanie Syjuco: The Unruly Archive* (Radius Books, 2024).

collections. This project employs a method of "mining and rephotographing" institutional archives, thereby exposing and filling gaps left by institutional apathy and curatorial oversight.

Her methodology not only diversifies archival content but also democratizes access. By photographing non-digitized archival items and sharing them through a speculative, "rogue" finding aid, Syjuco circumvents traditional barriers—both academic and financial—that many researchers and artists face. This initiative highlights the power dynamics embedded in decisions of what is considered "worthy of preservation and display."

The *Rogue Finding Aid* also fosters a collaborative and inclusive approach to historical inquiry by inviting other researchers and artists to engage with, reinterpret, and re-narrate archival materials. This contrasts sharply with the restrictive practices of many historical archives, which often limit access to physical spaces and prioritize certain narratives over others. Syjuco's work embodies a critical, participatory approach to archiving, which not only broadens the scope of what archives can represent but also who can access and interpret them.

Core objective of our research

   I admire many of these artists and scholars that have paved the way for our research to emerge. Initially, our research started precisely at this location of critique and dismantling of the colonial gaze embedded in and inherited from these found footages; building on and following similar artistic and research-based strategies. However, while conducting the research and carrying on the experiments, I noticed that most archival film practices and critiques were strangely made from within archival logics. I observed that most of these practices are still deeply invested in and caught by the regime of the archives. While recognizing that filling gaps in the archives, examining blind spots, and seeking justice or historical repair through reclamation and restitution are valid methodologies that heal important societal wounds (in relation to past and present colonial rules and powers), in my research I seek to go beyond filling gaps or pointing to blind spots in the Archives.

The core objective of this research is to investigate and expose ways to expand the limits and logics of the archive. By expanding, I mean going beyond the power of the Archives (institutions) and beyond the institutional imperative that comes with dealing with archives such as copyrights, paywalls, and any attempts to restrict "the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation."[17] How to go beyond appraisal and curatorial processes? How to move away from linear history (past, present, future) while still engaging with the past or historical narratives? How to break free from the archival logic? How to produce another historiography?

To do such excavation and exploration, in my research, the theoretical framework positions archives as vehicles to the canonization of knowledge systems and cultural viewpoints, as well as creation and maintenance of power relations. To directly engage with and challenge these established structures (the Archive, the collection), this research employs artistic mediums such as film, tapestry, and artist books[18] as investigative tools.

I consider the production of historical narratives and the production of archives as evidence of loss.[19] I acknowledge the intricate dynamics of power and authority entrenched within the archival framework[20], delineating the contours of our comprehension regarding who is deemed significant

[17] Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 10.

[18] Marc Johnson, Dana Claxton, Peter Motin, Laura Wee Lay Laq, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun et al., *Parley: How Would You Feel about Being Denied the Opportunity to Learn Your Ancestral Language?*, ed. Marc Johnson, X Position 27 (Vancouver, Stockholm: Vancouver Biennale, Stockholm University of the Arts, 2024).

[19] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995).

[20] Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand, "Critical Archival Studies: An Introduction," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (June 27, 2017), https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.50.

enough to be remembered, whose narratives are considered paramount, and the consequent limitations on the scope of historical knowledge that can be assembled.[21]

Methodology

To counteract and offer a contrasting narrative to the predominant, often colonial histories enshrined within archives, we leverage counter-historical methodologies, such as the technique of archival re-staging. This approach aims to express the inherent potential embedded within documents for re-interpretation. I endeavor to interrogate, expand, and redefine the interpretative possibilities latent within archival documents, enabling these documents to articulate alternative discourses divergent from their original intent. This methodological framework involves an immersive engagement with documents. I use an expanded definition of the word document that encapsulates both human and more-than-human remains such as film, cotton, or wool.

In filmmaking, I use common[22] and tailored processes of reading, re-reading, slowing down, zooming within the frame, sequence repetition and modulation of the frame rate. The intention is to fracture the prevailing narrative, infusing it with alternate interpretations by emphasizing minute details within the frame, recontextualizing the soundscape, and refiguring the decay of the original materials.

In weaving, I use different provenances of yarns and techniques to address and re-orient a concern with time, and how materials and objects carry cultural and historical meaning.

My exploration extends across a wide spectrum of strategies aimed at re-using, re-configuring, re-programming, and re-conceptualizing both archival logics and functions. Through artistic production, the endeavor seeks to uncover novel pictorial and historiographic dimensions that stand in opposition to the conventional historical inscriptions, policies, and procedures that govern the appraisal of historical significance and remembrance. In constructing this counter-historical narrative, an extensive compilation of archival materials has been employed, facilitating a deep dive into the methodological possibilities and the potential implications for the broader field of artistic research. This initiative is geared towards uncovering latent narratives and promoting alternative historical discourses, thereby pivoting the role of archives as passive vault to recognizing them as active sites of political power.[23]

Experiments

The thesis experiments with adding, restoring, repairing, sewing, beading, twining parallel histories and counter-narratives beyond grief and grievances.[24]

For example, the video pieces "Control Unit" (2021) and "A Whale of a Tale" (2022) reflect on historical and cultural amnesia embedded within archival footage. Similarly, "Winnie the Pooh is no

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[21] Sonia Combe, *Archives interdites : les peurs françaises face à l'histoire contemporaine* (Paris : Albin Michel, 1994); Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever : A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1995); Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever in South Africa (A Seminar by Jacques Derrida, University of the Witwatersrand, August 1998, Transcribed by Verne Harris)," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2002), 38–60; Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York: Steidl, International Center of Photography, 2008).

[22] *Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, Dal Polo All'Equatore (From the Pole to the Equator)*, 1987; Robert Lumley, *Entering the Frame : Cinema and History in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011); Christa Blümlinger, *Cinéma de Seconde Main : Esthétique Du Remploi Dans l'art Du Film et Des Nouveaux Médias* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2013) ; Yann Beauvais and Jean-Damien Collin, *Agir le cinéma: écrits sur le cinéma expérimental (1979-2020)*, ed. Antoine Idier (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2022).

[23] Achille Mbembe, "The Power of Archive and Its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht, Boston, Londo: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 19–26.

[24] Enwezor, Okwui, Massimiliano Gioni, Naomi Beckwith, Glenn Ligon, and Mark Nash. *Grief and Grievance : Art and Mourning in America*. London, New York: Phaidon Press Limited, New Museum, 2020.

Longer Safe" uses anonymized images from the Xinjiang Police Files to comment on the ethical limits of contemporary surveillance and documentation practices.

The series of weavings titled "The Sea is History" (2023-2024) draws from Derek Walcott's poetry, incorporating themes of Afro-surrealism[25] alongside the colonial legacy of Jacquard weaving techniques. This combination uses the symbolically rich method of weaving to interlace elements of Caribbean mythology, critiquing and rethinking the imprint of colonial legacies on cultural identities. The textured narratives embedded within each textile offer an artistic lens that merges historical insights with the marvelous, allowing for a dynamic reinterpretation and new perspectives on cultural history and identity formation.

Differently, "Parley" (2019-2024) employs the interview format to delve into the intricacies of language preservation and cultural identity, drawing on conversations with Indigenous artists and curators in Vancouver. This work addresses the lasting impacts of Canada's residential school system on native languages and cultures. By documenting these dialogues, "Parley" aims to contribute to ongoing discussions regarding Indigenous rights and cultural restoration. It serves as a platform for sharing local and personal stories, fostering a deeper public understanding of reconciliation and the sustained impacts of colonial histories.

The multi-channel video "Riot/Uprising" (2022) revisits the Attica prison rebellion, processed through edits emphasizing material decay and auditory glitches. These editing techniques metaphorically underscore the erosion of historical memories and the fragile, selective nature of historical recollection. By foregrounding the decay and focusing on the asymmetrical relationships between inmates and videographers, the work critiques the power dynamics in recording and preserving such histories.

Further expanding on this research terrain, I recreated a parody and the context of an artist estate as a documentation strategy but also as a critique of historiography and archival processes. This strategy underscores and draws a parallel with the historical use of satire as antiracist dissent and introspective critique.[26] I used the model of the catalogue raisonné and the finding aid as a framework for the entire documented artistic research.

Emerging from the depths of this investigative journey is the prospect of an alternate historiographical paradigm, one that renounces linear narratives of colonial progress in favor of a geopoetic model.[27] This approach serves as a methodological compass, offering a framework through which the complex interplay between the oceanic and terrestrial realms, the dynamics of diaspora and indigeneity, and the intertwined narratives of routes and roots can be explored. Through this lens, the research endeavors to chart new territories in understanding and interpreting our collective past, presenting an argument for a reimagined approach to historical narratives.

This foreword has explored the dynamic and multifaceted nature of archives, presenting them not merely as repositories of historical records but as active instruments that shape and influence cultural and societal narratives. Through experimental engagements with archival documents and diverse artistic mediums, this research illuminates how archival practices in contemporary art can be and

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[25] María Elena Ortiz et al., *Surrealism and Us: Caribbean and African Diasporic Artists since 1940*, ed. María Elena Ortiz (Modern Art Museum of Forth Worth, Delmonico Books, D.A.P. New York, 2024).

[26] "Commonly linked to prose, poetry, or dramatic arts, the art of satire uses a variety of literary and rhetorical devices to expose the perceived failings or shortcomings of individuals, institutions, or social groups. By way of the full spectrum of literary constructs and bit players, a satirist may employ invective, sarcasm, burlesque, irony, mockery, teasing, parody, exaggeration, understatement, or stereotype in a discursive presentation, all to hold his or her predetermined target up to extreme ridicule and scorn." In, Richard J. Powell, *Going There: Black Visual Satire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press ; In association with Hutchins Center for African & African American Research, Harvard University, 2020), p. 4.

[27] Chinedu Nwadike, "Tidalectics: Excavating History in Kamau Brathwaite's The Arrivants," *The International Academic Forum (IAFOR)* 7, no. 1 (2020): 55–67.

should be expanded and redefined. By challenging conventional archival logics and engaging with counter-historical methodologies, the project promotes a more inclusive and participatory approach to history, allowing for a broader range of perspectives and stories to be acknowledged and preserved. Moving forward, it is essential to continue exploring these transformative approaches, encouraging ongoing dialogues that question, reinterpret, and reimagine the role of archives in our understanding of history and culture. This endeavor not only enriches scholarly and public engagement with the past but also fosters a more dynamic and equitable archival practice.

List of sources and related artworks

Institutions, Sources	Collections, Documents	Algorithms	Artworks
The Freedom Archives	Committee to End the Marion Lockdown		Control Unit (2021)
Amazon Mechanical Turk	Custom tasks requested to workers		Answering Machines (2021)
OpenAI, Lucidrains		Gpt-3, Deep-daze, CLIP (Contrastive Language-Image Pre-Training)	@P0liceP0lice (2022)
Universal Pictures, Håkon Hukkelås	Frankenstein	DeepPrivacy: A Generative Adversarial Network for Face Anonymization	Frankenstein (After Whale) (2022)
Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation	The Xinjiang Police Files	DeepPrivacy: A Generative Adversarial Network for Face Anonymization	Winnie the Pooh is no longer safe (2022)
Oesterreichische Mediathek/Technisches Museum Wien	„Als Anthropologe im Kriegsgefangenenlager – Gipsabguss des Kopfes eines Kriegsgefangenen" „Als Anthropologe im Kriegsgefangenenlager – Herstellung der Gipsbüste nach dem Abguss"		As an Anthropologist in a Prisoner of War Camp (After Pöch) (2023)
Private collector	Captain Salvesen's Whaling Films		A Whale of a Tale (2023)
The New York State Archives	Collections Relating to the 1971 Attica Correctional Facility Uprising (Series B1340 Motion Picture Film and Videotapes of Attica Correctional Facility Riot, 1971-1972)		Riot (2023)
LAION, StabilityAI	LAION-5B dataset	StableDiffusion v1.4	The Sea is History (2024)
Kamau Brathwaite	The poem "Red Rising"		Sun/sum (2024)
Microsoft Azure, Azure AI Speech, Azure OpenAI Service	A knowledge base composed of written texts	gpt-4o-mini, azure tts, en-US-Davis:DragonHDLatestNeural, azure stt	Poem Johnson Brain Emulation (2025)