



Small acts of resistance: teaching young and emerging artists sustainable preservation strategies for contemporary creative practice

Lisa Cianci 

Victoria Polytechnic Creative Arts, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

The 'Context and Culture' unit of study contributes to visual arts students making informed decisions about sustainable preservation strategies in creative practice through participation in projects and activities that focus on preservation issues, and through the study of significant contemporary artists, curators and academics who engage with the archive in challenging and radical ways. This article gives an account of the complex nature of creative content created by artists, and the small acts of resistance we perform on a daily basis in creative practice.

KEYWORDS

Visual arts; archives; new media; digital media; social memory; preservation

Introduction

The power of the archival for artists lies in this tension between matter and meaning.¹

Almost five years ago I completed a multidisciplinary PhD research project at an intersection of the fields of visual art, digital media and archives.² Since then, I have continued to address my research proposition that artists can work with archives and archival methods in creative practice, to document and preserve creative content, and to develop new artworks.

This has taken place in my own creative practice as an artist (and archivist) working with digital and variable media,³ and in my role as an educator teaching young and emerging visual artists a range of units including research methods, cultural studies, digital media and video art.

This article gives an account of the complex nature of creative content created by professional and young and emerging artists, and the small acts of resistance we perform on a daily basis in creative practice.⁴

Images have been included throughout the article (see Figures 1–10) depicting examples of student work from the Diploma of Visual Arts course at Victoria Polytechnic. These images highlight the varied and sometimes ephemeral nature of the artwork produced by these artists and provide a visual context for the issues discussed in this article.



Figure 1. Sungyeol Yoo, *Self Portrait with Three Emotions*, charcoal and conté on paper, 2016, photograph by Lisa Cianci.

Context and culture

‘Context and Culture’ was a unit of study in the Diploma of Visual Arts (CUV50111), Unit Title: ‘BSBCRT403A Explore the History and Social Impact of Creativity’ at Victoria Polytechnic (Victoria University).⁵ This unit contributes to students making informed decisions about sustainable preservation strategies in creative practice through participation in projects and activities that focus on preservation issues, and through the study of significant contemporary artists, curators and academics who engage with the archive in challenging and radical ways.

Context and Culture examines the history and social impact of creativity in the context of artists understanding and situating themselves within a continuum of creative practice based upon creative influences, geospatial location, and societal and cultural considerations – all which affect the creation of artworks and related content across space and time.

The learning modules in Context and Culture examine four themes identified as significant areas of contemporary creative practice:

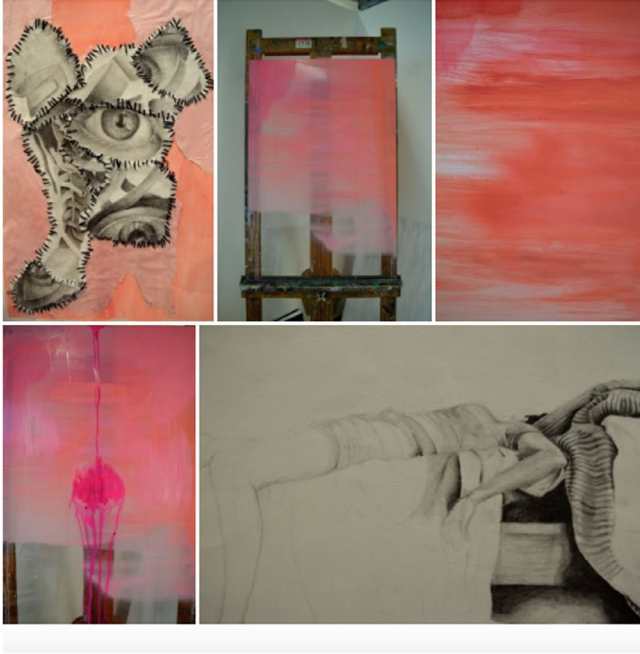
- remix in art;
- collaboration in art;
- artists as agents for change;
- artists and the archive.

The last of these themes might appear to be most relevant to this article topic. However, it is potentially all of these themes to a greater or lesser extent that describe the actions of

AUGUST 1, 2015 • 0

Works in Progress

Works in progress for my Body of Work for both Drawing & Painting. I am working on a series that revolves around introspection and self reflection. Here are some examples of my works that are in progress. Materials I am using include perspex, acrylic, spray paint and surgical thread (Sutures) I will expand upon the meaning in a future blog when all work is completed (I like to keep some things a secret!)



about.me/laurenkennedy

CATEGORIES

- Finished Works
- Gallery Exhibition Visits
- My Work in Progress
- Photography
- Printmaking
- Reviews
- Talks

ARCHIVES

- March 2016
- December 2015
- November 2015
- October 2015
- September 2015
- August 2015
- July 2015

BLOGS I FOLLOW

- [dhanan2013](#)
- [hope ashlea](#)
- [vallone's illustrations](#)
- [P.V. Styler!](#)
- [Barelee Art](#)
- [Belindas art](#)
- [Milky trash](#)
- [Art, the gift that keeps on giving](#)
- [WHO DRANK ALL THE RUM?](#)
- [Faith Metallinos](#)
- [yannica stakelbeck-kelly](#)
- [telishake](#)
- [Kimberley Julian](#)
- [prayerispresent](#)
- [spunkratt](#)
- [deniseahonan](#)
- [settleinthesun](#)
- [Helen Goodear](#)
- [thecandourofvec](#)
- [The Essence of Within- The Gender and Sexuality](#)

Figure 2. Lauren Kennedy, *Lauren Kennedy – WordPress Site: Works in Progress*, 2016.

contemporary artists in creative practice, which contribute to the creation of content and the formation of sustainable preservation strategies.

Archival terminology is not used in *Context and Culture*, although concepts expressing basic archival principles and *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* are referred to in a simplified way that suits the student cohort of young and emerging artists.⁶ Standardised schemata for documentation are not used either. Instead, a conceptual understanding of methods and practices in the field is developed.

The unit program strives to create a foundation in sustainable practices primarily for creating artwork with a good chance of survival, but also for documenting artwork and related content for the following reasons:

- preservation concerns for the artist or other stakeholders including potential future stakeholders;
- ease of access to both analogue and digital content;
- development of an online presence to present artwork and create networks and communities in the field of practice;



Figure 3. Valerio Cavazza, *Drag Monster*, 2014, digital image capture of performance and installation artwork.

- evidence of intellectual property, research and development of innovative and original work;
- useful information for the artist in the ongoing creative practice to make new work (a cycle of creation where new work is informed by past work).

The students: young and emerging artists

The visual arts cohort includes students who are diverse in age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and neurodiversity. Some struggle with poor English and literacy skills, some have mental health issues, physical disability or illness. They have skills in visual arts and varied experience and ability with digital technology.

The cohort has included students in recent years who have been homeless at times while studying with us, and initially struggled to be present and complete project tasks. Over time these students found the potential for digital technology to become a way to stay connected and keep creative content when there is no physical place to keep things. A smartphone and an online keeping place can make a great difference,⁷ allowing artists to continue making art when they have no permanent home or are living in a hostel or shelter.



Figure 4. Denise Honan, *Abandoned Factory, Detroit*, 2014, digital image.

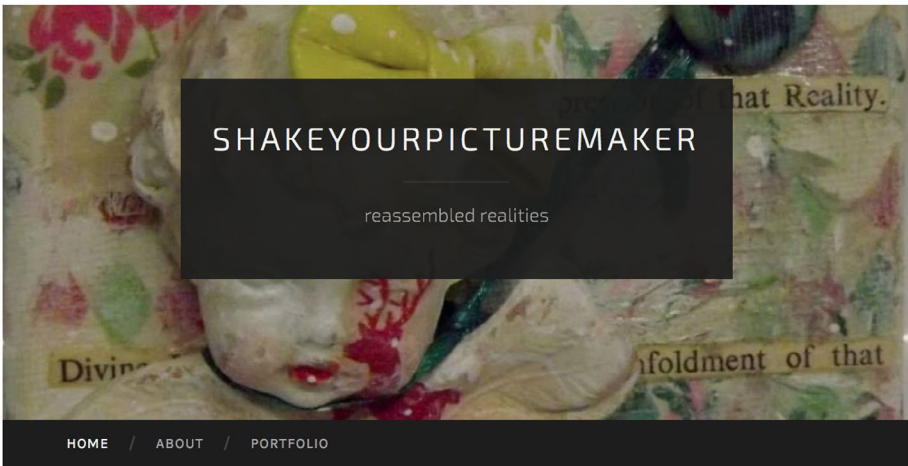


Figure 5. Patricia Waugh, *ShakeYourPictureMaker*, WordPress site, 2016, <<https://shakeyourpicturemaker.wordpress.com>>.

Some students use their creative practices to explore personal stories and situations involving identity, family, culture, diaspora and trauma. The content covered in the Context and Culture unit aims to develop an understanding of the potential for creative outcomes to exist as records of diverse experience. The hope is to give these young and emerging artists the tools and methods to best document, keep and preserve the expressions and manifestations of this diversity.

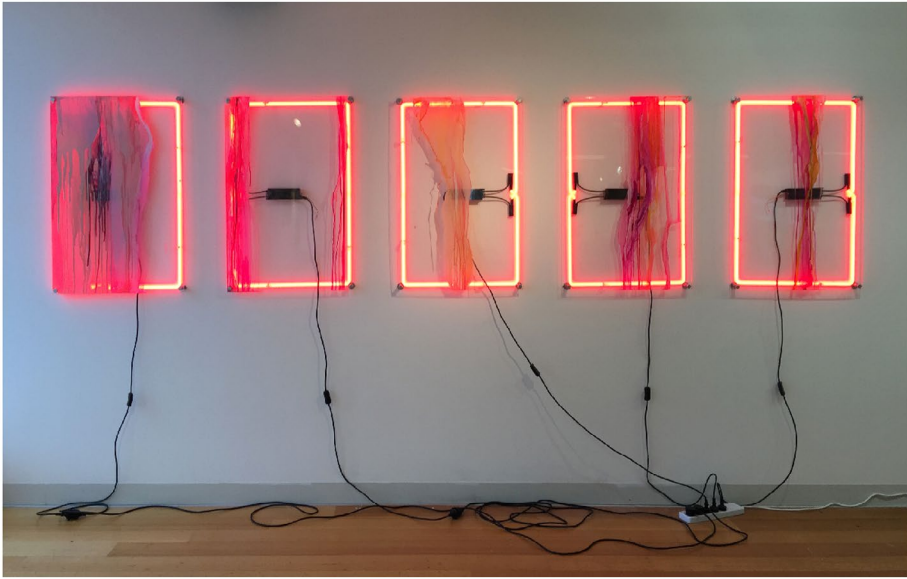


Figure 6. Lauren Kennedy, *Neon Series*, 2015, ink and neon lights on Perspex, photograph by Lisa Cianci.

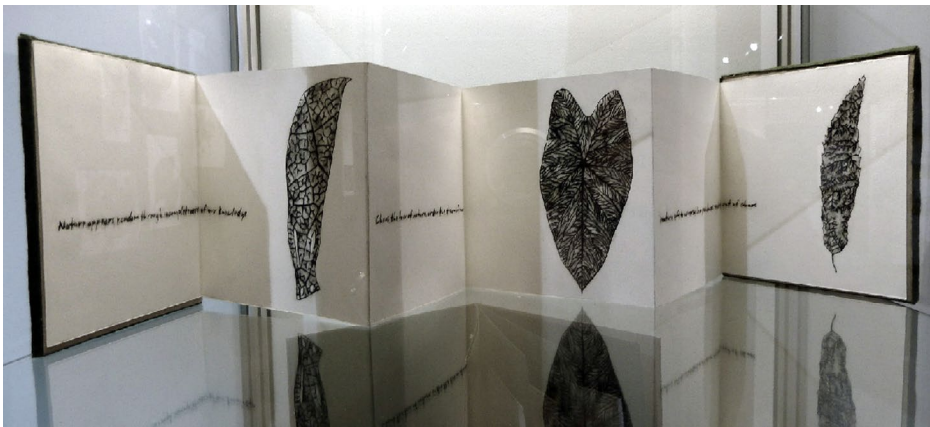


Figure 7. Angela Browne, *Order in Chaos*, artist book, 2016, photograph by Lisa Cianci.

The user finds meaning and makes meaning in an archive or a record and those meanings help him or her in structuring and restructuring the relationship between the self and the world and thereby in the formation of his or her identity.⁸

Small acts of resistance

In examining the work of significant artists in the field, we observe and discuss many creative acts of resistance that question the nature and relevance of art, and the role of the artist. Alongside these activities, we undertake projects that investigate and experiment with how and where these acts of resistance could occur. Acts of resistance could include resistance to:



Figure 8. Valerio Cavazza, *Kimono*, felted textile garment, 2015, photograph by Lisa Cianci.

- entropy, decay, destruction and loss of creative works through sustainable creative practices;
- memory loss – making art as a method of remembering or witnessing, creating what Pierre Nora calls ‘realms of memory’⁹
- overwhelming quantities of data and information flooding our systems through selective use of online systems and preservation strategies;
- forces that might silence creative freedoms and expressions of diversity and inclusion by creating diverse creative content, and contributing to the formation and preservation of ‘wild archives’¹⁰
- commodification of art by exploring alternatives to the current systems in place for exhibiting and promoting artworks using online networks and communities;
- tensions between respect for intellectual property rights of artists and the use of digital technologies to support sharing and re-use, through claiming a stance in relation to copyright and creative commons.

Remix as an act of creation and preservation

The remix artist is not only preserving a record of culture for future generations, but also for those of the past.¹¹

To understand our position within a continuum of creative practice, we examine the idea that artists don’t create in a vacuum. Our influences and experiences shape us and the



Figure 9. Leyla Newing, *Figure Drawing*, ink on paper, 2016, digital image capture from the WordPress site exhibited as part of a QR code augmented reality exhibition titled *Random Encodings*, 2016.



Figure 10. Patricia Waugh, 2016, *Artist Manifesto*, mixed media (small suitcase, manifesto statement and assemblage of objects), photograph by Lisa Cianci.

content we create. The idea of a brilliant moment of discovery is less likely than the ‘slow hunch’,¹² which builds slowly via a complex web of experience.

As visual artists, we don’t necessarily label the synthesis and progression of ideas, techniques and content ‘remix’. However, there are artists who explicitly remix the work of others, the ‘spectacular aura of the original(s)’¹³ remains intact, and in this way remix becomes a means of preservation.

Australian collaborative artists Soda_Jerk are a case in point. Their digital video artwork *Undaddy Mainframe* (2014)¹⁴ remixes, re-presents and reinterprets the ‘feminist malware’ text *A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* (1991) by ground-breaking Australian art collective VNS Matrix.¹⁵ This not only preserves the spectacular aura of the original, but it makes the work accessible again, in a different way, to potential new audiences.

The work of Scottish video artist Douglas Gordon also demonstrates this. His installation *Through A Looking Glass* (1999)¹⁶ uses two large screens projecting mirror-image clips from the famous scene in Martin Scorsese’s 1976 film *Taxi Driver*, where Robert De Niro’s character Travis Bickle asks ‘You talkin’ to me?’ The original film is a ‘ready-made’ in the Duchampian sense, and becomes a new artwork with new meanings and interpretations.

Tacita Dean’s artist book *FLOH* is a remixed collection of found photographs, carefully selected from her visits to flea markets, ‘coming across appealing images by chance’.¹⁷ The photographs are displayed without text: they are silent, they evoke untold stories and memories.¹⁸

Visual arts students investigate these artists and participate in activities where they can express a range of views around preservation, remix and intellectual property rights. Some maintain a very closed, protective view of the ownership of artwork and creative concepts, while some develop a more open attitude to sharing and re-use. Diverse views on this issue create lively class discussions. Anxieties over intellectual property rights surface regularly; in particular, when discussing the use of digital technologies and the Internet. The ability to ‘cut, copy, paste’ with such ease is a concern for artists who fear the threat to creative practice. As artist and academic Jane Birkin warns us, referring to Allan Sekula’s essay ‘On the Invention of Photographic Meaning’,¹⁹ ‘Digital objects can be moved, reassigned, and re-valued in a click, and often with no reference to their provenance; indeed, “as if they fell from the sky.”’²⁰ A cautionary tale for those of us concerned with preserving that spectacular aura and the continuum of creative practice.

Theft of intellectual property is not the only issue. Intellectual property might also incorporate how the artist wants their work to be presented and experienced. Lyndal Jones writes on her web archive for the publication *From the Darwin Translations*:

More important than copyright to me however, is the maintenance of some control on the quality of the physical experience of engaging with the artworks I make in the context of their development and exhibition.²¹

In examining these issues, we endeavour to develop that sense within the students of what they want to preserve, what level of control they are comfortable with, and how they want their work to be presented. Ultimately the choice is a personal one.

Archival methods in creative practice

The complex types of artwork students create in the visual arts course include but are not limited to: traditional painting, drawing and printmaking; artist books; visual journals;

wearable art; body painting; mixed media artworks including found and recycled objects; neon lights and other electronic light assemblages; textiles; paper and plastics; digital photography; video art; collages; installations and assemblages containing physical and digital media in combination; and works made from natural found materials such as leaves, sticks, feathers etc.

Just as we consider it important to teach visual artists about the ‘business’ aspects of the arts industry in vocational education, it is valuable to provide formal education in the management of records and objects that are crucial manifestations and expressions of the ‘core business’ of being an artist.

Making and exhibiting creative work also generates records that require management strategies. In the documentary film *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present*,²² a scene in the lead-up to her ‘tour de force’ exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010) shows Abramović expressing dismay at the quantities of administration and records necessary for the exhibition realisation. This video not only shows the development of a significant exhibition of performance art in a major art institution, it also shows students a behind-the-scenes view of the artist as worker, with all the attendant meetings and administration, stress and anxiety that comes with the vocation.

Students undertake a personal documentation project in Context and Culture using a sample set of their own artwork and related content. They must create a catalogue of items that also is prefaced with an artist statement describing their creative practice (the who, why and how of it), and they must write an ‘archival plan’ where they describe the kinds of content they create, what is of value and why, what needs to be kept and how it should ideally be kept. These projects have provided qualitative information about emerging artists’ practices, which is useful for developing educational content and assisting artists to improve on these practices.

The methodology used in creating the learning environment, undertaking creative projects, observing student artists, and collecting and evaluating information is situated within two recognised methodological practices common to creative arts research. Firstly, ethnographic methodology is practised where the researcher operates as a participant observer, forming ‘a critical engagement with a range of material and sensual practices in the contemporary arts.’²³ Secondly, practice-based research methods are used throughout involvement in creative projects.

Practice-based Research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. ... Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes.²⁴

These are some observations gathered from class discussions prior to learning about preservation strategies, and from the information submitted in the completed documentation projects:

- The preservation of artists’ work and related content is viewed as extremely important, although there is a mixed response to what individuals are prepared to do to keep their own work. Artists don’t engage in preservation strategies owing to lack of time and resources, or because they don’t view the content as important or ‘successful’.
- Keeping cultural heritage accessible is seen as an important way of preserving diverse voices and viewpoints. Students are keenly interested to study support materials as

well as finished works to understand the context and methods of production of other artists' work.

- Students are often already engaged in some form of sustainable practice and some measures to preserve creative work, but this can be taken much further through learning about appropriate preservation methods and practices.
- Visual journals are considered by most students to be very personal and extremely important to the creative practice. Keeping visual journals is encouraged in all areas of the visual arts course to document research and reflective practices, and as an aide-memoire – a keeping place for ideas and concepts for new artworks. As a result, these journals are well cared for, sorely missed if lost, and are fairly easy items to keep long-term if they are made from acid-free materials.
- A number of students already employ some form of digital documentation (prior to undertaking the Context and Culture unit), for complex and variable media artworks, and a small number also document traditional physical artworks as a personal catalogue using word-processing software. However, without instruction, this is mostly ad hoc, includes poor-quality imagery and lacks an overall plan for management.
- Students will continue to use non-archival and degradable/impermanent materials in physical artworks if they consider it essential to the artwork. Therefore, other means of long-term preservation are necessary, or the work may only be documented via image or video and not kept beyond exhibition or when available storage space runs out.
- Social media sites and WordPress sites have been used by many students as a method of documentation of process and of finished work (prior to and during the Context and Culture unit). However, without guidance, this is often done without a plan, structure, backup strategy, or consistent use of keywords or metadata. Learning about archival methods and metadata has enabled more comprehensive documentation practices, although some students are unwilling to take the time required to apply adequate keywords (tags and categories) to this online documentation, or will only apply it to selected items.
- There is a mixed response to preservation strategies related to digital online content. Some students are confident in digital systems' capabilities to keep records of their work, others are anxious about anything that resides online and potential for loss of content, or loss of intellectual property.

Preservation strategies and the artist's intent

Curators and academics Richard Rinehart and Jon Ippolito's recent publication, *Re-collection: Art, New Media and Social Memory*, is the culmination of years of research and project work in developing theories and methods that have influenced preservation strategies for many curators and stakeholders dealing with complex and variable media artworks.²⁵

Rinehart's theory of *reinterpretation* as a preservation strategy (rather than storage, migration or emulation) is considered to be a radical approach. However, it fits with the increasingly complex and fungible media that constitute many contemporary artworks such as Cory Arcangel's Gameboy cartridge hack, *Super Mario Clouds* (2002);²⁶ and the re-performance of Joseph Beuys' iconic performance work *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965) by Marina Abramović 40 years later in 2005.²⁷

A reinterpretation sacrifices basic aspects of the work's appearance in order to retain the original spirit.²⁸

This leads us to question: is it the same artwork if presented with different media, at a different time and place, performed by a different person? If so, what is the essential nature of the artwork and what are we concerned with preserving?

Visual arts students have a complex set of problems to face in their ongoing creative practices, and the examples that we study highlight issues that will affect them directly. Seeing how different artists and curators work with these problems provides students with the information needed to select the best strategy for their own work and explicitly make their intentions known. Rinehart and Ippolito agree that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to preservation. It will be a combination of stakeholders including the artists themselves that will find the best strategies for each work.

We only see the beginnings of these sustainable practices in our course. There is further potential for investigation in the form of a follow-up research project to reconnect with student alumni over a period of years to determine whether the practices started in our course have continued and developed in further education and/or professional practice.

Digital media technologies – use and implications for preservation

Students use the Wordpress.com free system to create a personal online presence and to document and present artwork.²⁹ Each student has autonomy to develop this website in a variety of ways, although there are certain tasks that must be performed, such as creating regular posts to the blog area of the site (visual journaling), creating an online portfolio and using, where possible, the tagging and categorising functionality of WordPress to add contextual meaning and aid in accessing content.³⁰

We investigate where content goes in the WordPress site, and how this can be backed up for preservation purposes. Issues identified here echo issues concerning the use of all social media sites and 'trust in abstract systems':³¹ adequate backup of content; ownership of content; anxiety about loss of content; and publicly sharing content with/without restriction.

WordPress content resides in two places on the server – the database containing the textual part of the site, and the images uploaded to the server as discrete files. It is in fact quite difficult to save this content in a meaningful way without the WordPress system.³² A mere export of XML data from WordPress will not save the uploaded images or other files alongside the XML.

For this reason, we encourage reliance on concurrent backup practices to keep content on local and cloud storage as well as the WordPress content. Despite requiring more time, it is a more effective preservation strategy than solely exporting WordPress data.

New media artist Martine Neddham's essay 'Zen and the Art of Database Management' is a particularly eloquent account of a new media artist struggling to manage content in an online environment. She writes the following about her online, interactive artwork *Mouchette*:

Once your webhost went down while you were presenting a lecture about your website at a conference about art on the Internet. Out of desperation you tried to browse your site from your local copy but the pages displayed all the PHP codes instead of the dynamic content. Confronted by all this code and your evident confusion, your audience became really impatient and didn't even believe you really were the author of a virtual character.³³

As a remedy to problems of this nature, new media arts organisation Rhizome.org publicly released its Webrecorder site in 2016 (<https://webrecorder.io>), which ‘allows users to create their own high-fidelity archives of the dynamic web’.³⁴ This provides an additional weapon in the variable media preservation arsenal. It is useful for artists’ websites that contain mixed, dynamic and interactive content that can’t be easily documented. Recordings can be downloaded as WARC files, which are standards compliant.³⁵ Our students have yet to test this service on their own content. We will attempt to use it later this year with the current cohort.

As an innovative and radical adopter of technology in performance and networked art, Australian artist Stelarc uses the virtual persistent environment Second Life as a location for his interactive online repository of past works.³⁶ The Second Life space provides a unique experience of Stelarc’s work and enables participants to meet in the space to engage with the contents and each other. It is both archive and performative artwork simultaneously. However, Second Life as a virtual environment is problematic from a preservation perspective. As a proprietary site, there is no way to archive or document the content built in one’s virtual space, other than live screen-capturing activity that occurs there.

From a different perspective, the Gerhardt Richter website is an exemplar of a custom-made website that documents the artist’s oeuvre.³⁷ It is the outcome of an extensive *catalogue raisonné* and archival documentation project, and a great example for students to recognise the importance of documenting context and relationships between items in the archive.

Destruction as a creative act

Destruction is also creation. (Marcel Duchamp)³⁸

For certain artists, there is little or no impulse to document and preserve creative work. The ephemeral nature of certain artworks requires that they not be documented, or that they leave no tangible trace beyond their brief existence. For some artists, the act of destruction can be a creative act.

In teaching visual arts students about preservation strategies, discussions inevitably lead to destruction, the need to selectively keep or destroy content, and the artistic tendency towards forming collections, even hoarding.

‘The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away’ (c.1977)³⁹ is a cautionary tale by Soviet non-conformist artist Ilya Kabakov about a man living in a small apartment, engaged in the futile practice of ordering the mountains of refuse he collects. He finds memory and meaning in the slightest scraps of paper. Memories can be attached to a bus ticket as much as a letter from a dear friend. Is it insanity to ‘allow the flow of paper to engulf you’?

This whole dump is full of twinkling stars, reflections and fragments of culture.⁴⁰

Over the years, I have encountered a greater number of students that are collectors and hoarders than students that are not. There is some kind of impulse to keep groups of items for actual and potential creative purposes: ‘I’m going to use these in a collage’; ‘I might do a painting of those’; ‘I’m photographing things I find on the street every day and putting them on my blog.’ These are, to quote Hal Foster, ‘so many promissory notes for further elaboration or enigmatic prompts for future scenarios’.⁴¹

We try to think critically about these practices despite continuing to collect and assemble. With limited space and resources, it inevitably becomes necessary to make some decision about destroying content. This also holds true in a digital environment: I write this as my

smartphone has almost completely reached its 120-gigabyte storage capacity owing to my inability to delete any of the 11,000-plus images and videos that reside there – even though I know they are backed up in two other locations.⁴²

As a response to this hoarding impulse, we examine certain artists that use destruction as the creative act, or choose to remove traces of the work.

Yann Le Guennec's online artwork *Le Catalogue* employs the act of viewing the image as the means of its destruction.⁴³ Each time the image is loaded to the web browser, two lines are drawn across it. Eventually, over time, the original image is obscured, destroyed, while simultaneously a new image is formed.⁴⁴

Swedish filmmaker and video artist Anders Weberg has a history of destroying past work, leaving no trace other than selected still images, related ephemera, the cached versions of digital items that others may have downloaded and our memories of viewing the work. One of his latest works, a record-breaking 720-hour film titled *Ambiancé*,⁴⁵ will only be shown once in its entirety and then destroyed.

Weberg finds freedom in destroying his work. He asks the question, 'Why must everything be accessible?'⁴⁶ His destruction of work is a radical act in a digital, online world where it is now so easy to keep everything but so hard to completely delete anything.

Artists using archives in radical ways to explore themes of identity, freedom and truth

Archives are traces to which we respond; they are a reflection of ourselves, and our response to them says more about us than the archive itself.⁴⁷

Philosopher and social theorist Brian Massumi recently participated in an ongoing event series on the Anarchive, at The Senselab in Montréal, Canada.⁴⁸ One event in particular, 'Distributing the Insensible: Performing the Anarchive', has generated a book publication: *The Go-To How to Book of Anarchiving*, in which Massumi defines the Anarchive in seven principles.⁴⁹

The anarchive needs documentation – the archive – from which to depart and through which to pass. It is an excess energy of the archive: a kind of supplement or surplus-value of the archive.⁵⁰

The anarchive comes from within the archive, but pertains more to the event and creative process. The artists and academics taking part in The Senselab events are exploring innovative ways of creating, performing and becoming: the anarchive operates as a radical point of departure from the archive.

Contemporary artists Sophie Calle (France) and Susan Hiller (UK) have both separately created artistic interventions in the Freud Museum, placing their own objects and archives into the space in a dialogue with Sigmund Freud's personal artefacts.⁵¹ Calle's intervention included placing a wedding dress on the famous couch used in Freud's psychoanalysis sessions and answering the door to visitors wearing Freud's coat, playing with concepts of sexuality, intimacy and the feminine.⁵² Hiller's intervention created a collection of found objects, documented in artefact boxes within a vitrine, as 'constant evocations of mortality and death.'⁵³

That the Freud Museum hosts this program of artist interventions speaks to the current zeitgeist of artists collaborating with and interrogating archives and museum collections to create new works. As Sue Breakell has observed, 'The visual arts sector ... has seen particularly rich interdisciplinary exchanges and discourses about archives.'⁵⁴

In recent years, significant international exhibitions such as Okwui Enwezor's 'Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art' in New York, 2008,⁵⁵ and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's 'DOCUMENTA (13)' in Kassel,⁵⁶ showcase many contemporary artists who use archival methods or documents in their work. Artists such as Christian Boltanski (France), Walid Ra'ad (Lebanon/USA) and Fazal Sheikh (USA) use archives as a means of challenging the nature of truth, veracity and collective memory in the archive, and in history.

Christian Boltanski's installation *The Store House* uses archival frameworks to create a deception – the images and objects that form the installation are not a true memorial and have been fabricated to evoke certain responses.⁵⁷ The Heart Archive (*Archives du Coeur*) is an archive of recorded heartbeats stored on the island of Teshima in Japan,⁵⁸ which began 'as an experiment, a natural development of his ongoing fascination with loss and memorial'.⁵⁹

Boltanski's large-scale artwork *No Man's Land* (2010)⁶⁰ was a massive, temporary installation at the Park Avenue Armory in New York.⁶¹ The space was filled with 30 tons of unwanted clothing, an enormous cherry-picker crane and the sound of human heartbeats. It makes an impressive impact and suggests what is absent – the bodies (and their stories) that are missing from these hundreds of thousands of items of clothing.⁶² Thoughts invariably lead one to tragic and traumatic events such as the Holocaust or the current refugee crisis, though there are multiple layers of meaning one could derive from this work.

Kathy Michelle Carbone writes about the production of 'affect' in relation to artists working with archives, creating observable manifestations of experienced emotion. This closely aligns with Boltanski's work, although he often works with material that has no authenticity or veracity. Nevertheless, the production of affect is actively present in his work.

Records are not solely representations of particular realities, but through the forces of their materiality and the presence of human bodies and activity they invoke, are affectively charged objects able to move people into new ways of being and doing.⁶³

Walid Ra'ad's work with The Atlas Group involved creating a website of fictional archives relating to the story of contemporary Lebanon, which questions not only the identity of fictitious contributors, but also the concept of a collective memory, or a contested history.⁶⁴

Fazal Sheikh employs the medium of photography and the artist's book to present beautifully realised portrait collections that highlight displaced people 'to respect them as individuals and to counter the ignorance and prejudice that often attaches to them'.⁶⁵

There are many acts of resistance to be found in these artworks. The concepts, methods and motivations of these artists, using archival methods and frameworks, provide inspiration to visual arts students who might be seeking a deeper rationale for their own work beyond merely aesthetic concerns.

Who would you give your passwords to? A discussion about trust, mortality, online presence and creative intent

The class discussion 'who would you give your passwords to?' is a chance to share thoughts, fears, hopes and intentions for the future, to think about mortality, what happens to our online systems when we die, and the impact current digital social memory has on artists.

Visual arts students are concerned with digital social memory, how it affects the presentation of their artwork, and the artist's presence in web environments. Attitudes vary greatly, but despite having concerns, most students keep open, public spaces to which they

post freely. However, there has been a small subset of students over the last five years who kept their WordPress sites private, only inviting the absolute minimum number of peers, friends and teachers to access these online spaces.

Such students are also among the individuals that don't freely engage in social media sites and perhaps also miss out on the networks and communities of practice to which more engaged students belong. The culture of participation is influential in shaping attitudes to freedom and privacy, and the relationship to creative content distribution and presentation. It's a complex environment for the emerging artist to navigate with positives and negatives at every turn.

Richard Rinehart and Jon Ippolito discuss how social memory has changed owing to web-specific cultural practices. What we remember and how we remember is mediated by the technology we use, and issues of ethics, control and privacy come in to play.

While we are scrambling to address these urgent problems [facing preservation of new media], we should not forget that this challenge also allows us an opportunity to re-examine and revisit social memory as a system and to ask, What is important for us all to remember? Whom do these collective memories serve? And who are the ones who remember?⁶⁶

Conclusion

Pedagogically, one hopes that visual arts education provides a transformative experience for students. It can be transformative for young and emerging artists to develop their own methods and practices, find their own voices, tell their own stories, and develop spaces to present and keep their creative work.

Investigating a broad spectrum of artists, curators and academics such as those discussed here, who engage with the archive and archival methods, is an important part of the learning process.

Undertaking projects with creative outcomes while learning about these visual arts 'experts in the field' enables students to expand their own creative practices from a position of knowledge and understanding. This allows for self-aware creative projects to develop in a sustainable way within a recognised continuum of creative practice. It encourages confidence to step out of comfort zones, develop critical thinking skills, explore possibilities for preservation and perform small or even radical acts of resistance.

Artists are surrounded by potential things that carry meanings which they may or may not put to use in a context that will endow them with many other meanings, through association, and make them art.⁶⁷

Endnotes

1. Excerpt from a letter written by Ruth McLennan to Uriel Orlow, from 'Artists and Archives: A Correspondence', in J Vaknin, K Stuckey and V Lane (eds), *All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*, Libri Publishing, Faringdon, 2013, p. 85.
2. From my PhD Exegesis: 'I propose that artists may benefit from consciously incorporating preservation strategies into our own art practices in a way that is immediately useful to us (useful in creating new work, in connecting with other artists and engaging an audience), and has value in the future to potential stakeholders. Furthermore, I also propose that artist education in preservation of variable media is of value to our field of practice – in order to empower artists to choose suitable strategies and systems if they are made available.' Lisa

- Cianci, 'The Blackaeonium Project: Workspace/Keeping-place – An Archival Continuum of Creative Practice', PhD Exegesis, RMIT University, 2012, available at <<https://exegesis.blackaeonium.net>>, accessed 20 March 2017.
3. Jon Ippolito, 'Accommodating the Unpredictable: The Variable Media Questionnaire', in A Depocas, J Ippolito and C Jones (eds), *Permanence Through Change – The Variable Media Approach*, pp. 47–54, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, and The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, Montreal, 2003.
 4. Not to be confused with the published book by S Crawshaw, J Jackson with V Havel (Foreword), *Small Acts of Resistance*, Union Square Press, New York, 2010.
 5. The Context and Culture unit was taught until 2017 and has been superseded by a new unit, 'Sustainable Professional Practice', which is currently being taught in semester 2 of 2017, covering similar content.
 6. This is an entity–relationship model related to retrieval and access of bibliographic and creative content. IFLA Study Group on the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records, *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records*, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, The Hague, 2009, available at <<https://www.ifla.org/publications/functional-requirements-for-bibliographic-records>>, accessed 5 March 2017.
 7. An online keeping place could be a social media site or online system that allows for upload and documentation of visual content such as Facebook, available at <<https://facebook.com>>; Twitter, available at <<https://twitter.com>>; Instagram, available at <<https://instagram.com>>; or a WordPress site, available at <<https://wordpress.com>>. All accessed 22 March 2017.
 8. Eric Ketelaar, 'Cultivating Archives: Meanings and Identities', *Archival Science*, vol. 12, 2012, p. 27.
 9. Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Vol. 3, Symbols*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998.
 10. 'Wild archives' refers to the term 'archives in the wild' used in Jeremy Leighton John with Ian Rowlands, Peter Williams and Katrina Dean, 'Digital Lives: Personal Digital Archives for the 21st Century >> An Initial Synthesis', Digital Lives Research Paper, 22 February 2010, Version 0.2, UK, p. vii, available at <<http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/files/digital-lives-synthesis02-1.pdf>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
 11. Ross Harley, 'FCJ-100 Cultural Modulation and the Zero Originality Clause of Remix Culture in Australian Contemporary Art', *The Fibreculture Journal*, issue 15, 2009: remix, available at <<http://fifteen.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-100-cultural-modulation-and-the-zero-originality-clause-of-remix-culture-in-australian-contemporary-art/>>, accessed 21 March 2017. The word 'remix' requires definition here because of the prevalence of popular culture music remix. Remix in creative practice and digital media arts in particular continues to be a popular topic of discussion for academics in arts and humanities, for example: Eduardo Navas, 'Remix Defined', 2011, available at <https://remixtheory.net/?page_id=3>, accessed 21 March 2017; Mark Amerika (ed.), *Creative Evolution: Natural Selection and the Urge to Remix*, Living Books About Life, 2011, available at <https://www.livingbooksaboutlife.org/books/Creative_Evolution>, accessed 21 March 2017. In the context of my subheading – 'Remix as an act of creation and preservation', remix refers to the creative practice of re-using or re-purposing existing content to create new work. It falls into the category of cultural practice that Navas describes as 'a form of discourse', 'intertextuality' and 'Regenerative Remix'.
 12. The concept of the 'slow hunch' comes from Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, Riverhead Books, New York, 2011.
 13. Eduardo Navas lists this as a requirement of the remix.
 14. *Undaddy Mainframe* is part of *The Lessons*, a series of short video works where 'archival history is folded into new constellations, producing virtual proximities between disparate temporal moments'. Soda_Jerk, *Undaddy Mainframe*, video art, 2014, available at <http://www.sodajerk.com.au/video_work.php?v=20140724231348>, accessed 21 March 2017.
 15. VNS Matrix are a pioneering 'cyberfeminist media art' collective of four female artists: Virginia Barratt, Julianne Pierce, Francesca da Rimini and Josephine Starrs. VNS Matrix website, c.2017, available at <<https://vnsmatrix.net>>, accessed 21 March 2017.

16. It is interesting to note that permission to use Scorsese's film was obtained before creating the installation work. Further information about *Through a Looking Glass* by Douglas Gordon can be found at the Guggenheim Museum website, available at <<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/5432>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
17. Mark Godfrey, 'Found and Lost: On Tacita Dean's FLOH', *October*, vol. 114, Autumn 2005, p. 93.
18. Dean is an artist who is also concerned with the preservation of analogue film as a medium which she uses in large-scale, installation-based works such as *FILM*, an 'episodic homage to the analogue processes of celluloid cinema', and presents as installation large film projections turned on their sides in a vertical format. Tacita Dean, 'FILM', 10 October–24 November 2013, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art Exhibition curated by Juliana Engberg, available at <<https://acca.melbourne/exhibition/tacita-dean-film/>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
19. Allan Sekula, 'On the Invention of Photographic Meaning', in V. Burgin (ed.), *Thinking Photography*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1982, p. 86.
20. Jane Birkin, 'Art, Work, and Archives: Performativity and the Techniques of Production', *Archive Journal*, November 2015, available at <<http://www.archivejournal.net/essays/art-work-and-archives/>>, accessed 21 August 2017.
21. Lyndal Jones, *From the Darwin Translations*, 'Conclusion', PhD by Publication, RMIT University, 2005, available at <<http://avocaproject.org/DarwinTranslations/concl.htm>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
22. The exhibition 'Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present' was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 14 March–31 May 2010. The documentary film of the same title was released in 2012, *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present*, directed by Matthew Akers and Jeff Dupre, Music Box Films, 2012.
23. Kris Rutten, An van. Dienderen and Ronald Soetaert, 'Revisiting the Ethnographic Turn in Contemporary Art', *Critical Arts*, vol. 27, no. 5, 2013, 459–73, p. 460.
24. Linda Candy, *Practice Based Research: A Guide*, Creativity & Cognition Studios, University of Technology, Sydney, CCS Report: 2006-V1.0 November 2006, available at <<https://www.creativityandcognition.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/PBR-Guide-1.1-2006.pdf>>, accessed 21 August 2017.
25. Richard Rinehart and Jon Ippolito, *Re-collection: Art, New Media and Social Memory*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA and London [Kindle version], 2014, accessed 21 March 2017.
26. Cory Arcangel, 'Super Mario Clouds', 2002, available at <<https://www.coryarcangel.com/things-i-made/2002-001-super-mario-clouds>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
27. The Joseph Beuys re-performance was part of a series of re-performances of Abramović's own work and the work of other performance artists. She obtained permission to re-perform from the artists themselves, or, in the case of Beuys' performance, from his widow. Marina Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces*, Guggenheim Museum, 2005, available at <<http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/abramovic/>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
28. Rinehart and Ippolito, Chapter 1, 'Reinterpretation', Kindle e-book location 109.
29. WordPress is an open-source website and blogging system that can be downloaded and installed on one's own web domain, or can be hosted by WordPress as a free or premium version. WordPress is used because it is free and open source, has an established development community, and has enough functionality and scope for customisation for students to meet a range of needs. WordPress.com (free hosted site) and Wordpress.org, 2017, available at <<https://wordpress.org>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
30. WordPress Posts can be tagged and categorised but the Pages function of the site currently does not allow for tags and categories.
31. As Anthony Giddens states: 'trust in abstract systems is not psychologically rewarding in the way in which trust in persons is'. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1990, p. 113.
32. One might also list the style and customisations of the WordPress site as a third part of the backup. There are plugins that will back up the entire site and create 'snapshots' but this is not a

- free service, and it would require WordPress to ‘restore’ the content. These kinds of plugins are useful as immediate disaster-recovery strategies rather than long-term preservation strategies.
33. Martine Neddham, ‘Zen and the Art of Database Maintenance’, in *Archive2020: Sustainable Archiving of Born-digital Cultural Content*, Virtueel Platform, Rotterdam, May 2010, pp. 10–19, available at <<https://virtueelplatform.nl/english/news/archive-2020-sustainable-archiving-of-born-digital-cultural-content/>>, accessed 28 August 2017.
 34. Dragon Espenschied, ‘Rhizome Releases First Public Version of Webrecorder: A New Perspective in Web Archiving’, 2016, available at <<https://rhizome.org/editorial/2016/aug/09/rhizome-releases-first-public-version-of-webrecorder/>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
 35. ‘The WARC (Web ARChive) format ‘specifies a method for combining multiple digital resources into an aggregate archival file together with related information’. Library of Congress, ‘WARC, Web ARChive File Format’, 2016, available at <<http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats/fdd/fdd000236.shtml>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
 36. Stelarc uses technology in his artwork to create prosthetic and robotic devices to augment his body. He questions the nature of what it means to be human. What is post-human? What is cyborg? Stelarc, ‘Stelarc: Projects’, available at <<http://stelarc.org/?catID=20247>>, accessed 21 March 2017. Second Life is a virtual persistent environment created by Linden Lab that enables people to create personalised avatars who interact with each other and the virtual world. Users can purchase virtual space in Second Life to set up a residence or business, and can purchase a range of products from other users. Linden Dollars is the currency in Second Life and these can be purchased with real currency to be used in the virtual space. Users can develop complex interactive environments and invite others to join and participate in events and activities. Linden Lab, Second Life, 2017, <<http://secondlife.com>>, accessed 12 March 2017.
 37. Gerhard Richter, ‘Gerhard Richter’, 2016, available at <<https://www.gerhard-richter.com>>, accessed 18 March 2017.
 38. Duchamp adopted this phrase, as did many of the Dadaists from Russian revolutionary anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, EH Carr, *Mikhail Bakunin*, The Macmillan Press, London, 1975, p. 435; Marcel Duchamp, Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (eds), *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp: Marchand du Sel*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1975, p. 139.
 39. Ilya Kabakov, ‘The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away’ (c.1977), in Charles Merewether (ed.), *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art*, Whitechapel Gallery & The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006, pp. 32–7.
 40. *ibid.*, p. 36.
 41. Hal Foster, ‘An Archival Impulse’, *OCTOBER*, vol. 110, Fall 2004, p. 5.
 42. Much of this content has potential and actual use in my creative practice and I want to have ready access to it.
 43. Yann Le Guennec, *Le Catalogue*, 2003, available at <<https://www.yannleguennec.com/archives/index.php?cat=13>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
 44. Although one wonders whether other copies of the original images exist elsewhere.
 45. Anders Weberg, ‘Ambiancé – First Short TRAILER – 7 Hours 20 Minutes in one take – by Anders Weberg’, Anders Weberg on Vimeo, available at <<https://vimeo.com/160627722#language>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
 46. Quoted from a conversation in ‘Facebook Comments’ between Lisa Cianci and Anders Weberg (not open to public view), Facebook, 6 March 2017.
 47. Sue Breakell, ‘Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive’, *Tate Papers*, no. 9, Spring 2008, available at <<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/09/perspectives-negotiating-the-archive>>, accessed 16 January 2017.
 48. The SenseLab is a ‘laboratory for thought in motion’. Based in Montreal, the SenseLab is ‘an international network of artists and academics, writers and makers, from a wide diversity of fields, working together at the crossroads of philosophy, art, and activism’. SenseLab, 2017, available at <<https://senselab.ca/wp2/>>, accessed 12 March 2017.
 49. Brian Massumi, ‘Working Principles of the Anarchive’, in *The Go-To How to Book of Anarchiving*, 2016, SenseLab, Montreal, pp. 6–7.
 50. *ibid.*, p. 5.

51. The Freud Museum is situated in the London house that Sigmund Freud and his family lived in after fleeing Austria in 1938. Freud Museum website, available at <<https://www.freud.org.uk>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
52. Sophie Calle is well known for exploring themes of intimacy and privacy in her work. She has created many conceptual artworks that have involved unorthodox practices such as following strangers and documenting their activities, asking her mother to hire a private detective to follow Calle herself and document her activities, changing places with a stripper for a day, watching people while they sleep in her bed, and emailing a breakup letter from her boyfriend to 100 other women to ask for their responses. Arndt Fine Art, 'Sophie Calle', c.2015, available at <https://www.arndtfineart.com/website/artist_937?idx=c>, accessed 21 March 2017.
53. Susan Hiller, 'Working Through Objects', in Merewether (ed.), p. 43.
54. Sue Breakell, 'Archival Practices and the Practice of Archives in the Visual Arts', *Archives and Records*, vol. 36, no. 1, p. 3, 2015, available at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2015.1018151>>, accessed 21 August 2017.
55. Okwui Enwezor (Curator), *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, Exhibition, International Center of Photography, 18 January–5 April 2008, New York, Catalogue published 2008, International Center of Photography, New York and Steidl, Germany.
56. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Artistic Director), *dOCUMENTA (13): The Guidebook*, 2012, documenta & Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany.
57. Christian Boltanski, *The Store House*, 1988, Museum of Modern Art, 'Christian Boltanski: The Storehouse, 1998', available at <<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80857?locale=en>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
58. Christian Boltanski, *Archives du Coeur – The Heart Archive*, 2005–, Teshima Island, Japan and other international locations.
59. 'Christian Boltanski', Archives & Creative Practice, Birmingham City University Art & Design Archives, available at <<http://www.archivesandcreativepractice.com/christian-boltanski/>>, accessed 3 February 2017.
60. Christian Boltanski, *No Man's Land*, Park Avenue Armory, New York, 2010.
61. Park Avenue Armory, 'Park Avenue Armory', New York, 2017, available at <<http://www.armoryonpark.org>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
62. Visitors were also able to record their heartbeats at the exhibition as a contribution to the ongoing Archives du Coeur project.
63. Kathy Michelle Carbone, 'Artists and Records: Moving History and Memory', *Archives and Records*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2017, p. 102, available at <<https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2016.1260446>>, accessed 21 August 2017.
64. The Atlas Group, 'The Atlas Group Archive', c.2007, available at <<http://www.theatlasgroup.org>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
65. Fazal Sheikh, 'Fazal Sheikh', c.2010, available at <<https://www.fazalshikh.org/index.php>>, accessed 21 March 2017.
66. Rinehart and Ippolito, Chapter 2, 'New Media and Social Memory', Kindle e-book location 213.
67. Vaknin, Stuckey and Lane, p. 85.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank alumni artists Angela Browne, Valerio Cavazza, Denise Honan, Lauren Kennedy, Leyla Newing, Patricia Waugh and Sungyeol Yoo for giving permission to include their artworks here in this article as an example of the wonderfully diverse and complex nature of the work visual artists create.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Lisa Cianci is an artist, archivist, digital media developer and educator. She makes art in both analogue and digital formats, with her current focus being real-time, dynamic, code-driven animations and installations that use fabric and discarded clothing as their medium. Lisa has exhibited her art work both locally and internationally in physical galleries and virtual spaces on the Internet. She worked for a number of years in archival projects at the University of Melbourne (Australian Science Archives Project and Melbourne Information Management). She currently teaches in Visual Art, Digital Media, Graphic Design and Library Studies at Victoria Polytechnic (Victoria University). Her research focus is on the intersections of art, archives and digital media technologies. She completed her PhD in Creative Media at RMIT University in 2013. Her PhD research project examined artistic use of the archival continuum model as a framework for creative practice. Experimental archival practices and preservation of diverse cultural heritage (using archives in the wild) continue to be among her main interests. She has published articles previously in an *Archives and Manuscripts* special edition with co-author Stefan Schutt (2014), and in *Global Ethnographic Journal* with Stefan Schutt and Marsha Berry (2014). The (*A&M*) special edition from 2014 was also published as a book: *Participatory Archives in a World of Ubiquitous Media*, Natalie Pang, Kai Khiun Liew and Brenda Chan Eds., Routledge (2015).

ORCID

Lisa Cianci  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3227-9021>