Archive Fever: Photography Between History and the Monument

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The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from far off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale. —Michel Foucault[1]

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

Photography and the Archive

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

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

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

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

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

Archive as Form

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

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

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

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

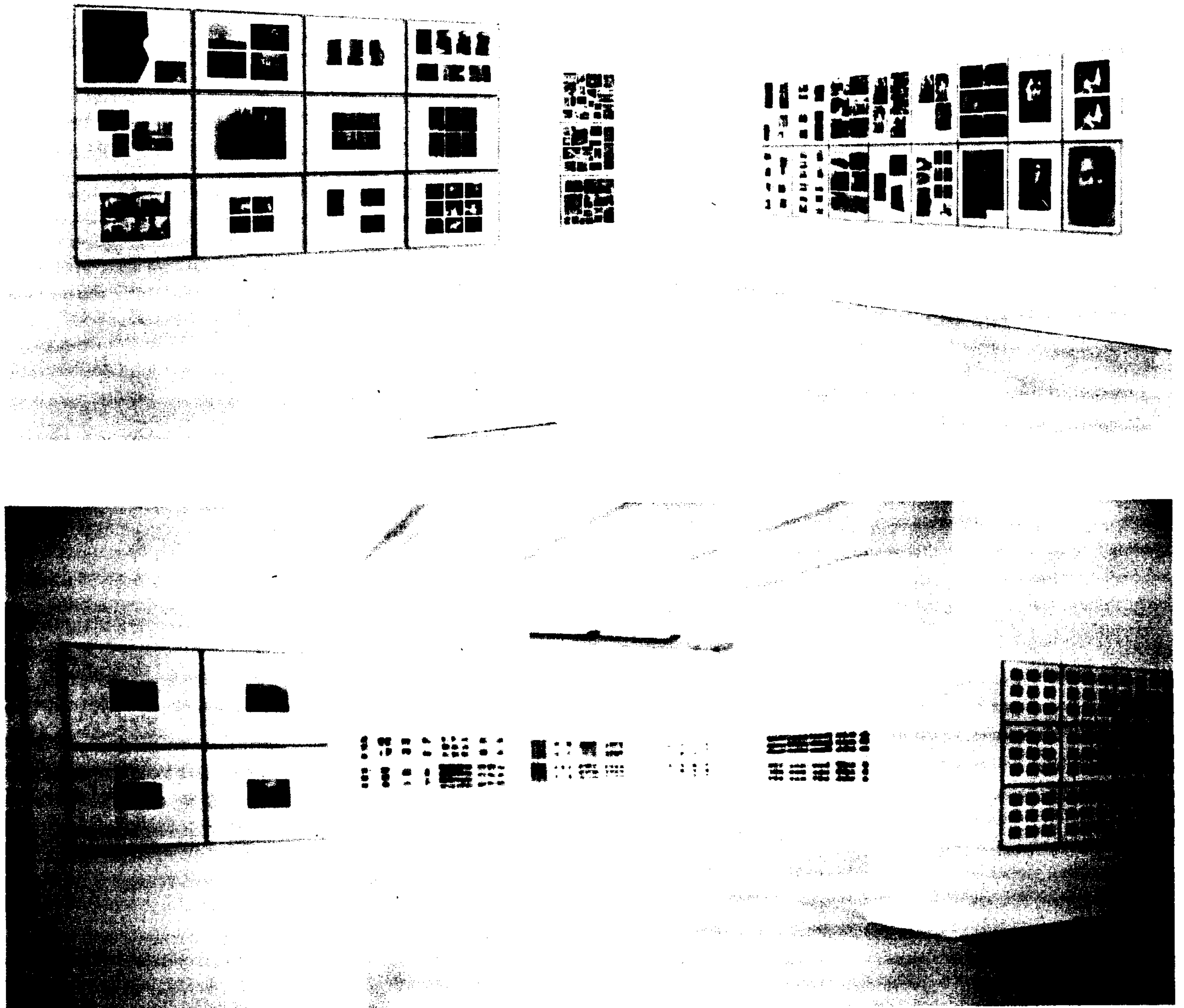
Inasmuch as any sensibility may wish to impose a restrictive order on the archive, then, the ability to do so is often superceded by concerns governing the disjunction between systems and methods. According to Lynne Cooke, the logic of *Atlas* is impeded by the impossibility of assigning a singular rationality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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Intelligence Failure / Archival Disappointment

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

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

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

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

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

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

> Montgomerie first trained his men, through exhaustive practice, to take a pace of known length which would remain constant whether they walked uphill, downhill or on the level. Next he taught them ways of keeping a precise but discreet count of the number of such paces taken during a day's march. This enabled them to measure immense distances with remarkable accuracy and without arousing suspicion. Often they traveled as Buddhist pilgrims, many of whom regularly crossed the passes to visit the holy sites of the ancient Silk Road. Every Buddhist carried a rosary of 108 beads on which to count his prayers, and also a small wood and metal prayer-wheel which he spun as he walked. Both of these Montgomerie turned to his advantage. From the former he removed eight beads, not enough to be noticed, but leaving a mathematically convenient 100. At the hundredth pace the Pundit would automatically slip one bead. Each complete circuit of the rosary thus represented 10,000 paces.
>
> The total for the day's march, together with any other discreet observations, had somehow to be logged somewhere safe from prying eyes. It was here that the prayer-wheel, with its copper cylinder, proved invaluable. For concealed in this, in place of the usual hand-written scroll of prayers, was a roll of blank paper. This served as a log-book, which could easily be got at by removing the top of the cylinder . . . Then there was the problem of a compass, for the Pundit was required to take regular bearings as he journeyed. Montgomerie decided to conceal this in the lid of the prayer-wheel. Thermometers, which were needed for calculating altitudes, were hidden in the tops of the pilgrims' staves. Mercury, essential for setting an artificial horizon when taking sextant readings, was hidden in cowrie shells . . ."[36]

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

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

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

Archive as Medium

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

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

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

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

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

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

Documents into Monuments: Archives as Meditations on Time[45]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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