

no more potlucks

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# EDITORIAL

## 25: Archive

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The Archive is a concept that has long been of interest to us, so we're excited to launch 2013 (our 4th year!) with an issue dedicated entirely to this topic. NMP was largely founded through an archival model: a journal as a means of collecting stories not likely found elsewhere, a portal of proclivities.

This is the Archive issue.

*Archive as in:*

- *a place or collection containing records, documents, or other materials of historical interest*
- *a long-term storage area*
- *a back-up*
- *a repository of traces of lived experiences*
- *a performance of research*
- *an impulse*
- *a drive*
- *an open secret*
- *an act of transfer*
- *a time machine*
- *a site of feminist knowledge production*

An internationally renowned multi-disciplinary artist, **Sonia Boyce**, together with sound artist Ain Bailey, produced the work *Oh Adelaide*, a video/sound piece which developed from a found film clip sourced from the Internet of the late performer Adelaide Hall performing “Creole Love Call.” The piece was included in the exhibition *There is no archive in which nothing gets lost* curated by **Sally Frater** and held at the Glassell School of Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, in Houston Texas. Exploring the intersection of place, narrative, history, representation, performance, and “the archive”, Frater interviews Boyce about her work for this issue of NMP.

**Mary Elizabeth Luka** was the founder and executive producer for CBC ArtSpots, a television and internet arts program that was in production for over a decade (until 2008) and involved more than 300 artists. As part of an interview with NMP’s Mél Hogan, Luka talks about how she employs media production methods to dig into the [ArtSpots archives](#), aiming to challenge the potentially totalizing narratives of ArtSpots and its history, and set the stage for a more fluid archiving of the creatively networked dynamics involved.

Using text and images from the Women’s Liberation Music Archive, **Nicole Emmenegger** introduces readers to the women who founded and currently maintain the archive. Emmenegger explains how the archive follows a DIY ethic, uses non-hierarchical data management, is built from open source software, and

allows visitors to the site to participate in this process and contribute to the project. The archive also relies on a touring exhibition that revives ephemeral objects from its collection, further reflecting on the importance of occupying a physical space. Nicole Emmenegger (a.k.a. DJ Jenny Woolworth) is a Swiss/American cultural producer, DJ and on-line archivist of women in punk. She currently lives and works in London, England.

Literary Archivist **Catherine Hobbs** and PhD student **Sarah Kastner** exchange thoughts on the challenges and ironies of working with literary archives after working together on the Yvonne Vera archival project (housed at The Public Text Program at Trent University). Together they reflect on Vera's theorization of silence, naming, and disclosure in her writing as a way of opening her archives to interpretation without closing it off.

As a departure from her work on the queer *Archive of Feelings*, **Ann Cvetkovich** reconsiders the traditional archive and the power of the archival box for both assigning value and for its potential to unleash magical connections to the past... Cvetkovich is Ellen Clayton Garwood Centennial Professor of English and Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

Starting with this Archive issue, we are more tightly curating each journal so that each piece speaks directly to the chosen theme, and most importantly, to every other piece in the issue.

Our next theme is HAUNTED, out March 1, 2013.

If you would like to pitch us an idea for a submission, please consult our [Guidelines](#) and use the [Submit](#) form (or email us: info at nomorepotlucks dot org).

NMP comes out every 2 months online, and bit later in [print-on-demand](#). To this, we'd like to officially welcome designer extraordinaire, [Jayme L. Spinks](#), to the p.o.d. team and say a giant thank you for your help laying out the last few issues and moving forward – thank you thank you thank you!

As always, huge thank you also to our copy editor, Tamara Shepherd, to all the contributors past and future, and to readers and supporters of the project in so many ways.

Dear readers, we are still and always committed to bringing forward a performative and transmissive journal bimonthly.

*Mél Hogan & M-C MacPhee*



CBC ArtSpots giveaway  
for artists, crew,  
Advisory Group  
volunteers. Image  
courtesy of M.E. Luka.

# Archiving ArtSpots with Mary Elizabeth Luka

*Mél Hogan*

What follows is an interview I conducted with M.E. Luka over the course of several months over email and Skype. Luka's project explores CBC's Artspots, a showcase of art and craft made by Canadian artists.

## **Mél Hogan: In a few lines, can you tell me, what is ArtSpots today?**

Mary Elizabeth Luka: It's a reminder that Canadian visual art exists and has enormous range. Also that it can flourish in tandem with popular culture / broadcast media, when resources are applied, creative control is shared, and a focused conversation is generated around it. The current website (if I can call it current!) is a placeholder – or a kind of elaborate bookmark. Traces of media production remain, including visual images (mostly stills), text, and broken video links, as well as navigation and still-functioning connecting links (e.g. to other websites). Additionally, some of the 1,200 short videos produced during that period are still played on television from time to time, usually late-night, or used by the artists involved to promote their own work.



Image courtesy  
of M.E. Luka.

**MH: So, it is foremost a website? An online arts network? Or is it more conceptual?**

MEL: Hmm. If we want to pin it down, I'd say it's more conceptual, though it has a distinctive materiality in the traces of its website *and* its televisual forms, and more particularly in the professional artist-curator-creator network it suggests is 'out there.' I see the latter as a virtual space of interaction created by the work undertaken together, as I argue in a forthcoming essay about mapping what ArtSpots was, drawing on locative media practices and urban rhythm analyses (see for example, Lemos and Vergunst, as well as art interventions in public space such as those conducted by [Kim Morgan](#)). The ArtSpots website is one that is broken down: it doesn't serve its original purpose of delivering art to viewers, and it shows no signs of being recaptured or rebuilt, nor does it seem to be formally archived. Together, the remnants that we can see on TV and on the Internet shimmer more brightly as suggestive indicators of a large and vibrant network of about 1,500 artists, curators, and arts-related producers, commenters, and presenters that took place with public broadcasting resources in a ten-year period. Can the reverberations of this project be felt along the trajectories created over this time period – and since then – and through the continued interactions and engagements among those involved? Are the material outcomes and shared experiences of ArtSpots a collection of *topoi*, as Erkki Huhtamo might suggest (Huhtamo and Parikka, 2011), engendered by cultural agents (artists, curators, technicians, etc.), invoking affect, aesthetic reflections, and cultural critiques? I'm not sure that explains nearly enough, but it does provide an interesting egress from the historical material content to the idea of mediated archive.

**MH: What's the URL?**

MEL: The URL is: [www.cbc.ca/artspots](http://www.cbc.ca/artspots)

**MH: Is this URL deemed obsolete, or 'archived'?**

MEL: Ha! Depends on whom you ask.



Loading...

`http://radio.cbc.ca:80/programs/artspots`  
`| 10:53:52 Nov 15, 2001`

Got an HTTP 302 response at crawl time

Redirecting to...

`http://radio.cbc.ca/programs/artspots/`

Actually, as much as I would like to characterize it as almost fully archived (I talk about some of the indicators of this at some length [elsewhere](#) and below), it's definitely making its way toward moribund, through a kind of benign and thorough absence of institutional attention since 2010. This is characteristic of many cultural digitization and digital-born projects of the late 1990s through the 2000s in Canada. The pointed absence (and sometimes, recuperation) of born-digital content such as that shown by your (Mél Hogan's) work done at and [around SAW video](#) (MacDonald, 2011) and the incremental demise of early multi-platform content such as CBC ArtSpots is even more pronounced within the context of a broader absence: the dearth of even web-based residues of several government-funded initiatives promulgated as Canadian cultural digitization of the 2000s, including the increasingly homogenized and visually dull presentations at the [National Library and Archives](#), and the [Virtual Museum of Canada](#), as well as the disappearance altogether of projects such as [Culture.ca](#). In effect, broken links and insufficient resources for maintenance and the establishment of newer budget priorities have wiped out Canada's first decade of substantive visual digital existence. Even the Internet Wayback Machine has no trace of the websites run by National Library and Archives Canada prior to 2007, and the period 2008-2011 is pretty patchy.

These broader conditions, and the relatively sudden decision to shut down production at ArtSpots in 2008 reflect the fuller and more complex, somewhat conflicted or ambiguous national endorsement of the project at CBC, which began regionally in 1997 and became national in 2000, and the subsequent dissipation of support over its last three years. Full disclosure: I was the founder and executive producer of CBC ArtSpots, and I was given to understand in February 2008 that the deliberation and decision to stop production for television and the internet happened in the last minutes of annual programming and budget discussions between then-Head of Arts and Entertainment, [Fred Fuchs](#), and then-General Manager of English programming, [Kirstine Layfield \(now Stewart\)](#), who is currently the Executive Vice-President of English Services for CBC. Fuchs explained to me that

the decision was made on the basis that ArtSpots was a mandate-only (and “niche”) program, and therefore was regarded as unsustainable in an environment where the emphasis was on programming that could draw large audiences.

The program wound down, and my job was made redundant, since ArtSpots made up a substantial portion of my workload and salary. Rather than bump someone else within the system in order to do a job I wasn’t especially interested in, I decided to leave the CBC. Before leaving, however, I made the pitch to a wider group of decision makers in senior management within CBC that resulted in the decision in March 2008 to create a permanent archive of ArtSpots content involving related media and other documentation, including the website. I stayed on until May 2008 in order to prepare the formal CBC archive. The television, document and tape-based archive was readied for storage: as part of the material archive, the entire website was backed up on two identical hard drives, including the code for the fledgling SQL database and the video content required to install the website elsewhere. Fuchs and others involved in website management at CBC made the commitment to keep the public website active for at least one more year (including video links), while discussions took place internally and externally about whether and how to move all the content to an educational institution or formal archive, or to keep it at CBC.

Some time in 2010, CBC went through a revamp of its English websites, and during that process, not all video links were converted. As a result, almost all of the links on the CBC ArtSpots website ceased to work. Around the same time, discussions with potential external recipients ended, and the formal ArtSpots archive has remained inside the CBC ever since. Almost five years after active production ceased, the 31 boxes and 300+ tapes representing over 300 hours of field footage as well as 1,200+ short videos, and eight or nine long-form documentaries that make up the formal archive are located at [CBC Halifax](#), where ArtSpots was headquartered. In the agreement I have with CBC, I have access to these archives through 2013 for my doctoral research at which point they might be migrated to Toronto. However, the website is unlikely to come back: although almost all of the

existing pages of the website still work just fine, with functioning text, still images, and links; the heart of the project does not work. Almost none of the video links will connect the user to the videos themselves. Finally, it's worth noting that I maintain my own personal archives from that time, including several notebooks, calendars and files, and a few examples of the many program giveaways developed for participants in the Advisory Groups, at exhibitions, or for artists and crew, not to mention DVDs and tapes.

**MH: When was ArtSpots first launched?**

MEL: It was conceived in 1997 during an artist residency I did at CBC Television in Halifax, as one of the final projects during my BFA. Shooting started early in 1998. The original 30-second television items began airing at random moments during commercial breaks in the spring of 1998. The website was designed and launched around mid-1998, and was among the first (if not the first) CBC website to function primarily to feature video. This was way before podcasts, and eight years before YouTube. At the time, it was the only website at CBC where the amount of video on the website exceeded the amount that showed up on television. In comparison, for example, the shorter-lived but much more heavily funded television and internet project CBC ZeD (2002-2006), was also provided with a regular five-nights-a-week (later three-nights) half-hour time slot, as well as the ability to have content uploaded by users.

**MH: What is your memory of working online then? Can you describe the Web of 1997?**

MEL: It was so much fun, and so frustrating. Everything was possible that we could imagine. Almost nothing worked the way it was supposed to. Websites were incredibly text-heavy, they would break often, and lots of them used dark colours with contrasting white or light lettering. It was really clunky to try to put thumbnail (or any other size) photos on the websites. You can see the residue of that today if you look at some the artists on the ArtSpots website that have thumbnail



Watch the video online



"Image gallery" of still images on an artist's page. © CBC. Image courtesy of CBC.



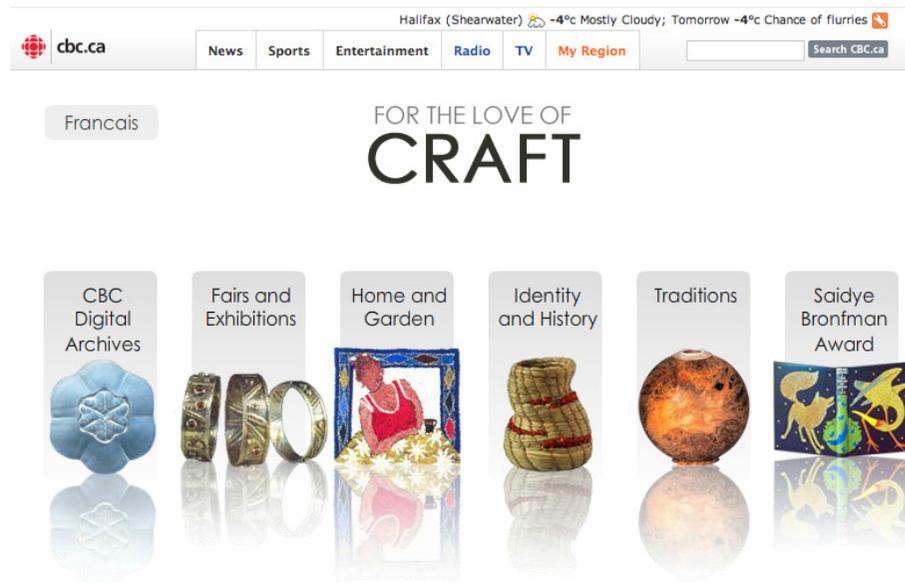
How one image would pop-up from the thumbnail in the "image gallery". © CBC. Image courtesy of CBC.

slide images (usually, five of them in the "image gallery"); see for example, [Dawn MacNutt's](#) images above.

A new box showing the image opens up if you click on one of those five images. As well, you can see it in the way the [artist lists](#) were developed on the website: they're just lists of names that were manually updated (not lists generated by a database

structure); there's nothing elegant or even very searchable about them. The same is true of the lists by province and territory. I had taken a programming (coding) course almost ten years before ArtSpots' initial launch into cyberspace, and things had changed so rapidly that by 1998, there was no way I could do the programming for the site – plus I was pretty busy with production. But my fine arts training always made me wince (still does) at the visual awkwardness of those lists, even just in comparison to ArtSpots' own features and special projects. In 1998-99, though, there was this burgeoning professional field in web design and programming, and we ended up working with some incredibly talented people, particularly at the beginning and on our features and partnership projects.

Screen capture from the ArtSpots website for the feature celebrating fine craft in Canada. © CBC. Image courtesy of CBC. This website was designed by Jeff Baur. This project involved partners such as CBC Digital Archives, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the Saidye Bronfman Award for Excellence in the Fine Crafts, currently administered as a Governor-General Award for Visual Arts.

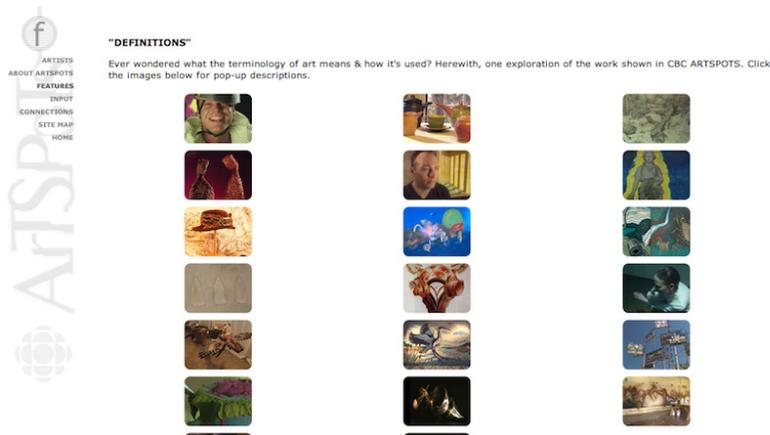


Coming out of intermedia and video art practices as I did, and heading into television and internet production as I was about to, it was clear that the visual standards for television were ratcheting up through a technically-enabled gift of higher picture resolution (even in early days) on the internet, and an

audience-centred ability to step outside a rigid schedule of deadlines and lengths of programming. But there was a problem with what I later understood to be bandwidth: there simply wasn't enough juice to power lots of video; CBC was only in its early stages of identifying and building the infrastructure that would be needed. Remember, this was way before the term bandwidth came into common parlance, and long before we all had high-speed connections. This actually worked to ArtSpots' advantage: our videos (initially 30 seconds only) were small enough that people could wait for them to stream and then watch them.



It was apparent from the beginning that CBC wasn't interested in having viewers download the videos on to their own servers, or to upload their own videos to CBC. The broader sharing practices that exist now initially weren't even on the horizon. Carolyn Gibson-Smith, Phlis McGregor (now a producer on Information Morning at CBC Radio in Halifax) and Jere Brooks (now a fashion designer) did some of the earliest work on the website with me, as programmer/designers and conceptualists. Brooks remained involved almost to the very end with our major partnerships and projects: not long ago, we were discussing the details of how many firsts for CBC we were involved in doing with ArtSpots and related partnerships projects, particularly for the internet.



A features page on the website. © CBC. Image courtesy of CBC.

It was obvious from the very first discussions about the website that white and greyscale would be the basis of the website's design: that we would be contributing to a rethink of the 'white box' of the gallery and the 'black box' of the television, and literally blurring the lines and understandings of each, as much as we could. Another first, developed with CBC's business affairs through an agreement for the artists that maintained their moral rights to their work, gave them the right to use the edited materials for their own promotional or educational use and gave CBC a broad ability to deploy the program materials on any platform that existed or would exist. Those of us involved in the early years were intrigued by what might happen by taking ArtSpots out to (or perhaps more to the point, taking it into the homes of) people who were interested in popular culture and the visual arts, even if they weren't especially aware of that.

**MH: What was its mandate?**

MEL: The mandate was to produce compelling visual content for use on television and internet, and to do so through the collaborative engagement of the visual arts community in curatorial work with public broadcasting. The relationship-building was values based, and just as important as the actual amount of content produced each year. This multi-focused mandate was closely aligned with the broader mandate in the [1991 Broadcasting Act](#) to reflect, include, inspire – and to serve. In fact, it was often referred to internally as a mandate program (usually as if that meant it wasn't a "real" program). Ironically, it was this very quality that prompted the cancellation of ongoing production in 2008.

**MH: What was your role in ArtSpots?**

MEL:

Then:

founderartistfacilitatorlistenerproducer/director (multi-platform, before it was called that)community organizerexecutive producertalent developer & teacherfund raiserresource negotiatorpartnership buildersome of the people involved called me the mother of ArtSpotsarchive creator

Now:

artistarcheologistskepticinvestigatorlistenerfacilitatorproducer/directorenableteacheractive archivist

**MH: Let's talk about archives and media archaeology. Is your plan to document / salvage / restore ArtSpots?**

MEL: This is a very interesting question to me. My instinctive response lies somewhere between "all three" and "none of the above." As an artist, a professional media producer, and as the facilitator of a community-centred project, I tried to ensure ArtSpots was pretty reflexive from the start. At least one interviewee in my doctoral research has characterized my activity as a bridge between worlds, requiring thought, intuitive action, and documentation. This included contracts, of course, budgets, annual plans and multi-year plans, and it included schedules for shooting, editing, etc.; storyboards for shoots; editing logs; voluminous correspondence; meeting notes and lots and lots of lists, particularly lists of artists. And, the website's very structure documented the fundamentals of the ArtSpots process, including the value statements, criteria etc., as well as partnership projects we undertook, artist videos, and so on.

Very early on, I wrote the show "bible," which was circulated in hard form and on the CBC's intranet (the internal-use-only website). The bible documented the creative and logistics processes we used to create the relationships with the

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cultural community, the internal CBC constituents, and artists we worked with. It also provided administrative forms. Every second year, I hosted and led a strategy session for the producer/directors, and a number of other individuals involved in ArtSpots. At those sessions, we reviewed content, discussed creative approaches and logistics challenges, sharing our expertise and experience – some of this was also documented. So the dossier is pretty extensive already, including an inventory of the material retained in the formal ArtSpots archive described earlier. Of course, much of this material is not publicly accessible, with the exception of the material that is housed on the ArtSpots website, including a “[How To](#)” manual based on the bible.

I’m genuinely not sure about the extent to which media archeology will be helpful to me in rethinking ArtSpots. I am using a strategy in the research which mobilizes media production as a method to interrogate ArtSpots – potentially a kind of deliberate (and deliberative) embodiment of the theoretical, historically-based “remediation” endeavour that Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) might suggest may be inevitable as technology develops, and which draws from Marshall McLuhan’s legacy of deliberate engagement with materiality in/and media. This may bring me closer to media archeology as a theoretical framework, through the methodological forays I undertake. In addition, I am interested in how Lynne Huffer characterizes the work of Foucault in relation to archives. In particular, the suggestion that experiences are “archivally thick” critical contributions to archives strikes me as useful in thinking through power and social relations, very much the concern of Foucault (2010). Such archival practices “puts us into the question[s]” asked in terms of affect as well as the subject relationship (Huffer, 334-5).

My current interest in documentation lies with historicizing and rethinking the project. For me, what that means is to situate it in the larger context of cultural media production, and cultural engagement generally, both at the time, and as it continues to impact today. Methodologically, this includes engagement in a material practice myself: I am conducting a research-creation project for my doctoral dissertation research that probes and interrogates ArtSpots through a

mixed-methods program, including recording interviews, editing them together with ArtSpots information and visuals, combining them into a series of non-linear documentaries, and seeking feedback on how I am processing this unusual and lengthy experience.

As for restoring ArtSpots, no. The time for CBC ArtSpots as it was, has passed. It was a creative endeavour that responded to a time of technological transition (i.e. producing for the internet and television together – or multi-platforms, as it was called then). It addressed questions of why and how artists and the CBC could work together to produce content for broad and varied distribution. It leveraged partnerships inside and outside the CBC, and responded to specific regional priorities in production. As the CBC re-centralized in the late 2000s, to respond to newer broadcasting priorities, the resources available for the project shrank. And it's not that there isn't a huge opportunity now for shifting the emphasis to generating curatorial, aggregative work involving artists (and paying real artists' fees). There is. Conceptually, and creatively – right up to the wireframe design, website coding and video production – we did a lot of work on exactly that set of ideas in 2007-2008. During those last 12 to 15 months, we prepared to migrate the ArtSpots website to a database that would also be able to link to YouTube, to be pushed to mobile devices, to incorporate uploads, and to provide a much broader interactive sphere to operate within and to support. But the CBC wasn't ready or able to support that kind of interactivity then; at least, not in the visual arts. Five years later, that opportunity and gap remains in how the public broadcaster engages with visual culture. And it may be the case that CBC is ready for it now, I don't know. I don't see signs of it. But it wasn't to be in 2008.

Salvage, on the other hand: such a good word, and perhaps more closely aligned with media archeology. Yes, "salvage" is one of my motivations for embracing ArtSpots as the primary case study in my dissertation research. To salvage the work that was done. To assess the role ArtSpots played at a specific time period in growing the connections between the visual arts community in Canada and some of its supporters including the public broadcaster, and vice-versa. I don't want to overplay the significance of ArtSpots, but to acknowledge the specific work

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that it did. That it secured both television and Internet airtime for artistic work – during a time before showing video programming on the Internet was a common practice – was huge for the visual arts community. That it did so with integrity, and through curatorial consultation and collaborative production and aesthetic practices is all the more remarkable. That it made the content generated available for educational, exhibition, and promotional use was pretty unusual. More than one of the interviewees and former participants that I've been speaking with remarked that there has been nothing like it since. Moreover, it's clear in these critical analyses of what ArtSpots did that there is an ongoing need for such bridging, engagement, and content generation. Linking television production, gallery exhibition, internet websites, discussion groups, artist promotion and creative input, and broadcast technical creative expression together for so extended a period was an intriguing exercise that resulted in a complex diversity of programming. You bet I'm curious to see what can be "salvaged" from that.

**MH: How?**

MEL: Oh boy. Have I got ideas about salvaging. All of the artists are able to use their own material for promotion and educational purposes, so they could put the CBC ArtSpots items on their own websites or online channels. CBC has given me permission to use the existing ArtSpots material for research purposes, including limited re-use in the non-linear digital media production I'm producing. Furthermore, CBC Digital Archives could simply redigitize existing edited items (there are over 1,200 of those), and/or port the website itself into the digital archives environment as part of its significant workload of digitizing as much of the CBC's current, oldest or most endangered tape archives. CBC could also choose to allow artists and scholars to dip into the archives and edit additional content from the hundreds of hours of existing field tapes. I hold out hope that CBC will continue to be sympathetic to potential partnerships to access and make use of the video-based and web-based material for scholarly and related purposes, presumably including the involvement of at least some of the artists, curators, and technical teams originally engaged. After all, this ten years of vibrant and interesting contemporary Canadian visual arts is a real treasure-trove of visual content.

In addition, and more dynamically, there is real value to be realized in finding a way to activate or revisit the conceptual and community-building work the Advisory Groups did, in two key ways. First, it would be interesting to find or found a working forum where curators, artist co-operatives, commercial and university galleries, craft federations, museums, media practitioners, broadcasters, and non-traditional bases of artistic knowledge come together to discuss the kind of curatorial matters covered in the ArtSpots discussions, and to actually make visually-based media. This is a huge opportunity for sharing knowledge and creating synergies. Secondly, it would be terrific to revisit the lists of artists to update that information and find a way to circulate it more broadly, fleshing it out as a living, vibrant directory of artists that could be augmented on an open-source platform. This would not just be the 300 or so artists involved in CBC ArtSpots production itself or the almost-2000 artists identified as potential participants, but an active reservoir of the thousands more that could rapidly be augmented and shaped by artists and others whose concerns touch on the arts and media.

ARTSPOTS

## DENISE COMEAU

PAINTING



Detail from Denise Comeau's "image gallery." © CBC. Image courtesy of CBC.

These are potential exercises or expressions of what I call creative citizenship in my research. As I've noted [elsewhere](#):

By creative citizenship, I mean to suggest a focus on the dynamics among particular groups of individuals involved in innovative media production, particularly artists [and] producers in relation to curators and] programmers, technical crew, and ... cultural audiences. Generally, I am preoccupied with exploring and documenting how participatory processes of media production can foster specific kinds of citizenship in the creative context. ... I am interested in understanding how such processes can generatively entangle creators and broadcasters with each other and with specific citizen-creator and curatorial groups, through new creative strategies embedded in the promise of collaborative media production. (Luka, 2011)

I have lots of other ideas that I'd like to pursue that grow out of my own experience with ArtSpots and elsewhere. The key to "salvage" here is to find new ways to bring forward what really worked, and to find original ways to activate the conversations, collaborations, production, distribution, and curation of visual and media production, locally, regionally, nationally, internationally...

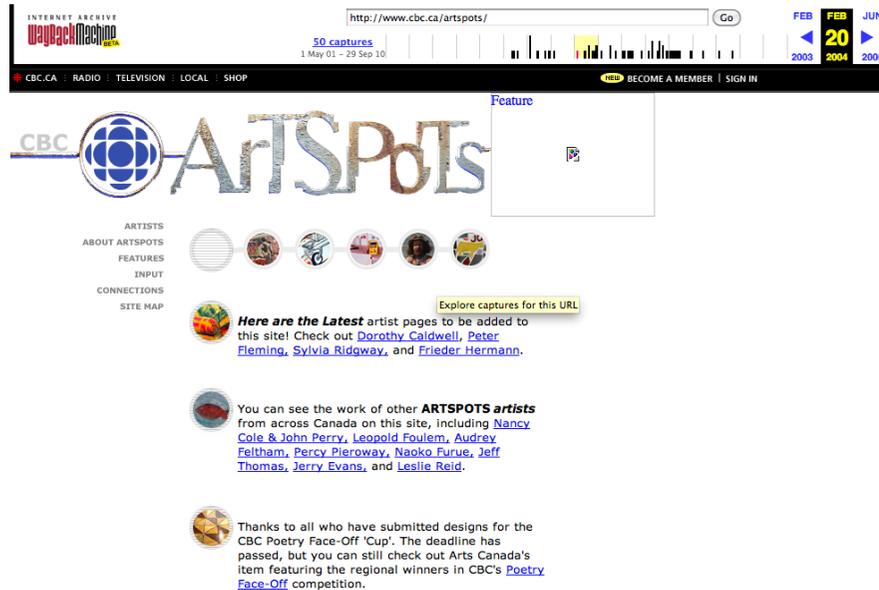
**MH: What can you show and tell about the material traces of the project?**

MEL: As you can see from the stills and videos scattered through this article – lots! I've just completed a comprehensive series of interviews and discussion groups with former participants in the ArtSpots project. The conversations are not just about ArtSpots but also about the ways in which that project connected to workflows, art and media production of the time and today, government and broadcast policy, and the personal networking in the visual arts community and the media community. These are present-day concerns that require ongoing thought and discussion.



There are many images based on artists' work or on the projects and partnerships that ArtSpots was involved in that can be found on the original website, [www.cbc.ca/artspots](http://www.cbc.ca/artspots), as well as through my ongoing research work, periodically sharing it on my own [website](#). There are also plenty of objects in my personal archive, including notebooks, giveaways, printouts, DVDs, etc. – a few of these are photographed

below. And there's a lot to dig out of my head and others, through the interviews, for example.



An image of the Artspots home page, c. 2004, captured by the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. © CBC. Image courtesy of CBC and the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.

## MH: What is your doctoral research about?

MEL: What is the relationship between art and media production and dissemination? This is the large umbrella under which much of my professional work and scholarly research takes place. Currently, my focus is on production practices and creativity in cultural media production, including the meaning and potential of creative citizenship, and the often precarious work of artists and creative producers in daily life and professional engagements. More specifically, my doctoral research is an in-depth, highly reflexive study of CBC ArtSpots. Ten years of thoughtful creative activity resulting in extravagances of discussions,

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proliferations of practices, reams of visual and audio footage, and terabytes of backups and storage: what was the generative relationship between art and digital media in Canada at the cusp of the 21st century? I seek pathways through archival materials, communications methodologies, potentially totalizing narratives, and theoretical frameworks about the work of art and artists in relation to broadcast and digital media. By digging into the video art and broadcasting roots of CBC ArtSpots, I intend to cast light on the helpfulness of mobilizing old and new methodological and creative processes side-by-side with theoretical structures and strictures.

Methodologically, this includes a deliberative mash-up of scatterings of post-it notes, workflows incorporating Evernote(s) and website field notes, hard-copy bibliographies and handcrafted reflections, mappings of my house of theory, and the themes and questions that arise through tilling the verdant soil of discussion groups and in-depth interviews. Segmenting and manipulating some of the ArtSpots' archived video productions (embedded with high production values) and newly-recorded investigative conversations that illuminate mostly social values (such as in-depth interviews and discussion groups), I propose to combine these into a short series of non-linear documentary structures available through [Korsakow](#) software, along with images based on freeze-frames grabbed from the almost-moribund (or partially archived?) ArtSpots website, scanned pictures of production notes, and photographs of gratefully-intended not-for-profit "merch." The videos embedded in this article are samplings from one of those non-linear documentaries in-progress, in this case from interviews conducted of me. Taken together, these potentially chaotic and seductively productive incursions hurtle me into provocative interrogations of vernacular and cultural citizenship (see Joke Hermes and Toby Miller as well as William Uricchio and, in Canada, Caroline Andrew et al), the creative commons, and the cultural industries, interrupting and tracing that concept of creative citizenship that I seek to move toward.

**MH: Should Canadians, or anyone care about ArtSpots now? Why? What does the project reveal?**

MEL: Sure. People tend to care about ArtSpots if they care about public broadcasting or cultural media production or how the arts inform, intrigue, and insist on constantly rethinking and reshaping cultural identity and practices on a day-to-day basis: how we reflect ourselves to ourselves and others but also what the world looks like, how it connects to itself and how we might understand it and enable change over time.

From the interviews I have conducted, it is evident that there are more practical outcomes. For artists, it has been a significant boost to their careers through credibility in an increasingly media-savvy and media-saturated environment. For Advisory Group volunteer members, it was an opportunity to share best practices and priorities across the country, as well as participate in a region-to-region dialogue about what was happening in the art domain. For CBC, ArtSpots exercised and challenged aesthetic assumptions used in professional media production and dissemination practices, engendered employee satisfaction and growth, and engaged particular audiences in exercises of cultural citizenship, for example, of the sort suggested in studies such as those conducted by Miller and Hermes. In addition, ArtSpots communicated credibility for CBC in the broader cultural community, in terms of the care taken, and the respect shown to artists and creativity. Of course, for CBC, it also helped to achieve mandate objectives around regional reflection and Canadian identity. And, I suppose, it was good for Canada in the sense that it generated a new set of understandings and dialogues around what Canadian art was at the turn of the 21st century.

Additionally, it allowed – and allows – for experimentation and testing new technologies and approaches to work and community engagement that could then be applied in other programming areas, and which can be taken up in new and interesting ways by the digital arts and media communities in particular. This is especially true as artists' skills and interests develop and the technology itself



becomes ever more accessible, while audiences diverge into more sophisticated, and ever less so, groups (oh the YouTube cat videos!). In that sense, then, more broadly, ArtSpots opened doors to practices and experiments across a wider media landscape and demonstrated what it is possible to do when a virtual space is created for and by a community, enabling resource leveraging and the practice of creative citizenship. I don't intend to suggest that this is the closing of a circle, or conclusive question answering about these subjects. Quite the opposite. Digging into ArtSpots suggests that the more the archive is actively engaged, the more questions there will be to explore.

Images courtesy  
of M.E. Luka.



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THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 1977

# It's Jam Today —no men Saturday

AN all-woman rock group has banned men from a concert they are holding this weekend.

The group, Jam Today, will refuse entry to any member of the opposite sex who tries to go along to a special fund-raising gig at Waterloo on Saturday night.

The group, formed last February, is made up of eight women musicians aged between 19 and 28. They have played to mixed audiences in the past but drummer Frankie Green said today: "It's quite true that no man will be allowed in on Saturday."

Out of 38 gigs performed by the band this year, about half were for mixed audiences and half for women only.

The Equal Opportunities Commission says that a "women only function" does not break the sex discrimination laws.

Frankie said at her home at Lansdown Drive Hackney:

"There are lots of occasions for mixed concerts."

"This is one occasion where we think it is important to have women only."

"Men often go out to events on their own so why shouldn't women?"

"This particular women's gig isn't just a concert. It is being held at the Action Centre at Waterloo and we are also having a workshop so that women in the audience will be able to play our instruments and we are holding a discussion on various feminist subjects."

"We felt that women might be somewhat inhibited in having a full discussion if men were present, that's it."

The group, which runs at a loss, is hoping the concert will raise money to help them continue. They write most of their own music, which they describe as "funky rock," and have played at various colleges, clubs and women's events.

# An Introduction to the Women's Liberation Music Archive

*Nicole Emmenegger*

It's Thursday, 11 August 1977 and a local London newspaper teases with the headline "It's Jam Today - no men Saturday." The article goes on to introduce the band Jam Today and their "Funky Rock," which will be on display for a women-only audience at the Action Centre at Waterloo on the coming Saturday. The article is quick to point out that the event will not fall foul of the Equal Opportunities Commission - a women-only event does not break the sex discrimination laws. How fortunate indeed, not only for the eight female musicians of Jam Today, but also for the audience invited to be in attendance at the gig and the workshop to follow, wherein the audience members are invited to learn how to play the band's instruments as well as engage in discussions on various feminist subjects.

The article appears to have been hastily clipped from the newspaper, with a chunk missing near the bottom and without a proper citation of the name of the broadsheet. Yet the slim, one-column piece has been carefully preserved and saved - worn, torn, and taped up again after what must have been numerous re-reads and giggles over the last thirty-five years. I am not fortunate enough to have seen the original version, however, instead I am gazing at a scanned and digitized file that appears in my web browser.

This bit of ephemera is part of the online [Women's Liberation Music Archive \(WLMA\)](#), which sets out to document twenty years of feminist music-making by female musicians and bands from across the UK and Ireland between 1970-1990. The project was developed and is currently overseen by [Deborah Withers](#) and Frankie Green. Withers, a historian, punk-rock musician, and independent publisher, had been wanting for years to archive music made by women during the Women's Liberation Movement, but the project only came to fruition when she met Green, former drummer for Jam Today, who had been looking for a suitable platform to share the story of her band and the stories of her female musical colleagues. After a process of gathering initial materials while mastering the art of scanning, blogging, and Soundcloud, the archive finally sprung into virtual existence on May Day 2011.

The digital database contains hundreds of photos, news clippings, flyers, manifestos, interviews, sound files and videos – many of which are seen and heard here for the first time. Most of the materials were obtained directly from the former members of the 130 bands featured on the site, including Abandon Your Tutu, The Fabulous Dirt Sisters, The Northern Women's Liberation Rock Band and Sisterhood of Spit, to name but a few.

It is slightly ironic that a piece on male exclusion should be one of the bits that managed to make its way into the collection. For the archive itself, as Withers notes, by its very existence, is a record of all that is missing from the herstory of women in music – the lost, the invisible, and the untold: “It is a record of no's and exclusion as much as it is a document of what happened.”

While collecting stories and items for the archive, Withers saw how the narrative of many of the bands played out identically – they never recorded professionally, stuck to live performances, and eventually disappeared into obscurity. If they did manage to gather enough cash and gumption to take to the studio, the final product was often not a sufficient reflection of who they were as a band, due to difficulties with sexist male technicians and their shyness about asserting themselves and controlling their own sound.

So the women took it upon themselves to imagine and create a collective space where their voices and music could be heard and where the process of music-making became as important as the music itself.

### **Your Music in Those Dark Spaces: Developing a Feminist Lineage**

Screenshots from Silk Sows Ear, a film by Penny Florence, 1986.



We see: individual close-up shots of three women with faces painted in white greasepaint and abstract tribalist designs. They recite lines from a poem as the camera switches from face to face with a polarizing distortion filter added for extra dramatic effect.

We hear:  
Imagine  
a whole new culture  
reaching right into your body's soul  
recognition  
outside the obsessions  
...

Imagine  
new song  
Power  
in those dark spaces  
your music  
in those dark spaces

“ It is slightly ironic that a piece on male exclusion should be one of the bits that managed to make its way into the collection.

This is a moment from [Silk Sows Ear](#), a 1986 short documentary film on feminist music-making in 1980s Britain by Penny Florence. It is one of the many hidden treasures uncovered and digitized for inclusion in the online archive. The film both depicts and incorporates a feminist working process, from the “collective crewing” list in the film’s credits to the lengthy segment around demystifying the music recording and production process. The story is non-linear – a veritable collage of images, sounds and stories – and while the special effects are distracting at times, the joyful benefits are clear: sharing knowledge, collective working, and being part of a feminist lineage. The WLMA follows suit through its non-hierarchical data management and do-it-yourself archiving tactics, using free and open blogging software that allows visitors to the website to comment and elaborate on content. More than anything, the site is a place to browse, where entries blend into one another and you stumble across one band while searching out info on another.

Much as the film highlights not only the musicians in the scene but the producers, sound engineers, administrators and everyone behind the scenes – the archive equally documents music-making (and blogging!) as a process rather than an end product. Both the film and the archive become about sharing, inspiring, and encouraging a new generation of feminists to take tools in hand and make things happen.

Bands such as the Feminist Improvisation Group (FIG), an “up-to eight piece improv ensemble,” sparked a lifelong interest in collectivist principals for many of its participants. Sally Potter, now an esteemed filmmaker, spent a bit of time with FIG in the 1980s and took that shared collective ideal with her when creating the [SP-ARK archive](#). This online resource makes readily available materials relating to every stage of the filmmaking process of Potter’s 1992 film *Orlando*. Everything is shared – from the filmmaker’s handwritten notes to production schedules and call sheets, behind the scenes photographs, publicity documents, and casting footage.

Similarly, Maggie Nicols, since her time with FIG, has gone on to a successful solo jazz career but still enjoys her Monday night [Gatherings](#) that have been taking place every week since 1989. These informal musical, social workshop drop-in sessions have improvised music and collective action at their heart. And, as Nicols states, “The Gathering has a political dimension, it’s creative, it’s community. It feels like home.”



Photo of the  
York Street  
Band by John  
Walmsley.

## Taking it to the Street: Embodying a Feminist Space

The permanent home for the archive is online, but its presence and impact go far beyond the digital. Recognizing the importance of creating and occupying a physical feminist space as well as virtual one, Withers has developed a touring exhibition, [Music & Liberation](#), to coincide with the archive that sees collected objects of ephemera, recordings, video, and audio visiting various gallery spaces across the UK in the Autumn 2012. In each of the cities of Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow, and London, a live events program brings together young and old generations of female musicians to reflect on the past and work together in the present.

The poster for the *Music & Liberation* exhibition features a photo that fittingly encapsulates both the attitude of the exhibition and the movement itself. The photograph depicts a scene in an English public town square sometime in the 1970s or 1980s: in the forefront, one of the members of the all female York Street Band, with tambourine in hand, is dancing with an older woman. The moment is spontaneous and light and the jig they dance is one perhaps inspired by the lively accordion player smiling and high-footing it in the background. It's anyone's guess what the situation is beyond the frame of this photo – was the older woman a mere onlooker who was roped into a dance by the band? Or, upon hearing the music on the street, did she spontaneously decide to join in?

Whatever the situation before or after the photo was snapped, this moment is what counts – this feminist, joyful, transitory, ephemeral minute. It is here that we get to the “body's soul” of what inspired the women to band together and make music thirty years ago and what motivates Withers and Green to catalog and archive these moments now. They are, we are, claiming space, making noise, demanding to be heard, seen and remembered, even if only for a moment and even if only for ourselves – a notion perhaps still as radical and necessary now as it was on that August evening in London in 1977.

“ Whatever the situation before or after the photo was snapped, this moment is what counts – this feminist, joyful, transitory, ephemeral minute.

*The Music & Liberation exhibition will make its last stop in London from 1 December 2012 – 13 January 2013. From April 2013, the physical archive will be deposited in the Feminist Archive (South), which is housed at the Special Collections archive at Bristol University.*

**Nicole Emmenegger** (a.k.a. DJ Jenny Woolworth) is a Swiss/American cultural producer, DJ and on-line archivist of women in punk. She currently lives and works in London, England.



Photo by Ireen  
Dubel, Yvonne  
Vera Archives,  
2012.

# Literary Archives, Fictional Truths and Material(real)ities: The Yvonne Vera Project

Catherine Hobbs and Sarah Kastner

*“Here, on his palm, the trace of a human being enraptured by the notion of flight.”  
(Obedience)*

*“However, they are not a people of returns. In this they are nomads. Their most supreme fear is confusing the gods. Not being inanimate objects, but brimming with contradictory impulses, they dare not adhere to a muteness however serene — in them such a satisfaction would be complacency, a suppression of futures, a type of forgetting. To remember, they must be away from the tangible forms they have created. Whom do they obey, and why is it so necessary?” (Obedience)*

**Catherine Hobbs: Hi, Sarah. It’s great to get together to talk with you now that the final push for your thesis is over. This seems like a good time for us to exchange thoughts on the Yvonne Vera project and the challenges and ironies of working with literary archives. I have long tried to bridge between literary scholarship and archival scholarship. For me, being second reader on your thesis is the perfect conflagration of many elements I have seen developing in literary study and in archives in recent years.**

SK: Well, Catherine, it was such a pleasure to have you on my thesis committee; and I agree that it is really wonderful to have a chance to talk again about the many threads that we began to weave together during the last year.

**CH: Before we get ahead of ourselves, maybe you'll outline Yvonne Vera for us so that the context of this project can be clear for readers? I think it's clear for us that our discussion and your thesis are a response to Vera's powerful writing and to her personal situation.**

SK: Yes, I think that's important. The first time I heard about Yvonne Vera was when I read her obituary in the *Globe and Mail*. I had cut the clipping out to put on the fridge to remind myself to read her works, and to show my partner, who I knew would be especially saddened to hear of her death, since he is both Zimbabwean and an artist. Not only was Vera an accomplished writer, she was also a strong advocate of the arts both in Canada and Zimbabwe, and she acted as director of the National Gallery in Zimbabwe for a number of years.

Vera was only forty years old when she passed away. She was at the height of her career after a ten-year period when she published five novels and one collection of short stories, and she completed a Masters and PhD at York University. She was working on a sixth novel, *Obedience*, at the time of her death in 2005. Vera left an indelible mark on African literature, winning a slew of international awards, including the Macmillan writer's prize for Africa, for *The Stone Virgins* in 2002, and the 1997 Commonwealth writer's prize for best novel, Africa region, for *Under The Tongue*. It was just one year after Vera was awarded the highly prestigious Tucholski prize by Swedish PEN (2004) for "a corpus of works dealing with a taboo subjects" that she passed away in a Toronto hospital.

Five years later, Trent University was offered the chance to house Vera's personal papers for a period of ten years. Lucky me, I was asked if I would take this project on as a Masters thesis in the Public Texts English graduate program. I would determine fonds, identify and describe each item as found in the archive, create a preliminary

file list of those items in a spreadsheet, and write archival notes interpreting the custodial and creative history of each fonds.[1]

During the project, I interviewed key persons about the archives' creation to provide a context for the archives and to draw attention to the ways that Vera's memory was being shaped by the archival process. In addition, I wrote a thesis that engaged archival theory and the particular resonances and challenges posed by the Vera archives.

From the beginning of the project it was clear that the circumstances of Vera's death would figure substantially in the archive, particularly in its inclusions and exclusions. Canadian news coverage revealed that she had been living with HIV, a fact that she had not disclosed during her lifetime. The news that she had died of AIDS-related meningitis shocked the world, and as detailed in the archival material, writers and activists from around the world who work with HIV/AIDS issues were faced with complex questions about her decision to stay silent.

Since I could not speak directly with Vera about her papers and the issues of disclosure that arose during the archival process, I relied on Vera's literary executor and dear friend, Mary Polito, and Vera's ex-husband and long-time close friend, John José, to help me navigate and interpret the papers. While José explained that none of the material was intended or envisioned as an archive, he also helped me to understand its context and his effect on Vera's record-keeping activities at various stages of her life. He informed me about some documents that he and Vera had created together, like their wedding album, and others that began as collaborative projects but that shifted as time went by. For instance, they began collecting newspaper clippings and reviews in a black scrapbook during the early, exciting days of Vera's success, but this activity lessened as "time went on (and) success became routine and notices more numerous and we grew less thorough" (Kastner, 6). Elsewhere, he explained the ways in which he saw his approach to texts as different from Vera's, saying that he liked "to read from a detached perspective, with road maps and binoculars in hand, so to speak; while she (Vera)

writes from the tumult of no man's land, where nothing is quite in focus and the senses cannot cope" (Petal Thoughts, 80). These insights helped me to identify José's role as a creator and collaborator of the documents in the first fonds, which shows Vera's documents in the context of their relationship, and also helped me see how Vera's relationship to documentation shifted under different circumstances.

By locating mutually informative sites of excision, silence, and absence in her published writings and in the archives, I have also tried to theorize Vera's personal archive as a site fraught with questions of agency, authority, and autonomy in postcolonial and globalized environments. I saw my role as archivist as two-fold: I wanted the archives to remain embedded in their relational origins and I was also interested in recovering and retaining Vera's creative voice somehow. These two archival energies seemed interwoven and mutually informative.

**CH: When I first began to write about personal archives (the archives of people) and literary archives, it struck me that archivists were not "doing right" by the archives of individuals because we were not looking closely enough at the behaviours of the creators in making and keeping their records for individual reasons of their own. It struck me repeatedly that both archival theory and deconstructive constructs of archives were leaving out personal situations and the individual's creativity and space to reject or reformulate ideas.**

**As we discussed briefly during the email exchanges for the thesis, I do think that postmodern theories have an unsettling relationship with "actual" archives. Theorists like Derrida and Foucault have been tremendously influential, with many productive offshoots for archives. However Derrida's and Foucault's works are often used to analyse a traditional idea of archives as a centralized repository of official records presided over by the archivist as the gatekeeper and emphasizing centralized discursive power.**

Archives coming from individuals are, after all, not formalized bodies of records (like the records of companies or government) but the documents created from people's everyday lives and work. In response, I have tried to help broaden scholarly writing about personal archives.

It is from there that the focus on the site of creation becomes useful and we can see how personal archives and creative archives might unsettle this vision of centralized discursive power. For example, if your archives contain scraps of inspirational material or old receipts kept for sentimental reasons, does their placement in your archives talk back to centralized power and a formalized official record from a highly personalized place?

Archivists are in a fraught situation because we are dealing with living or recently deceased creators of archives, and yet we seem not to have been asking what importance or interpretation could be given to the archives by trying to see them in *their* personal contexts as opposed to through those other lenses. Imagine, for one moment, how it might feel to have the archives of your own life taken in by a repository: aren't there fairly obvious grounds for wishing that the archivist does it right in your lifetime? I was marking, in my own writing, a responsibility of the archivist to the individual behind the archives.

As Maryanne Dever so eloquently put it, archives are a "net held taught over pockets of nothingness."<sup>[2]</sup> Documents are threads that we are left with; the air around them is innocuous and at the same time filled with possibilities for interpretation.

On the other hand, imprisoned Chinese visual artist, architect, and writer Ai Wei Wei writes: "Utilitarian function is dictated by how you use something, how you use it simultaneously dictates who you are, and the implications of your existence."<sup>[3]</sup> In this way, we can see documents as helping the individual to develop and define a life.

**So, it is in the space between the responsibility to the site of creation and the creation of documents for the originating creator of the archives, and the paradoxes of trying to interpret the archives in a way that does not further efface or construct, or at least may be seen as appropriate, that the archivist finds herself and that we found ourselves in this project.**

SK: I was first treated to hearing you speak about personal archives in my first year of my Masters degree at Trent. I was about to begin archiving the Vera papers and knew very little about archives theory or professional practices. But it struck me even then that merging literary scholarship with archival scholarship had the possibility to open up a potential for the self-reflexive approach that postcolonial theorists, especially Gayatri Spivak, have been arguing for from Western academics writing about the “Third World.” Because academic environments often cause students to theorize global issues largely through texts, our engagement with theory happens on computer screens and in libraries. Working with the Vera archives eliminated considerable distance between myself and the writing I was studying, but putting these theories into practice was both exciting and terrifying – as my supervisor, Hugh Hodges, said to me at one of the more anxious moments during this archival project: “People don’t stand still like books do.”

Acting as an archivist and researcher during this time in my life has underscored the importance of forging a relationship to my work that simultaneously interrogates my own position. Discovering your work on personal archives and the notion of “doing right” by writers really spoke to this rich and fruitful tension. Your thoughts about the ethics of being an archivist of writers has pushed me to scrutinize my own work of interpreting the Yvonne Vera archives, and to think critically about the relationship scholars have to their subjects, particularly as a scholar of African literature.

**CH: Layered over this, of course, is archival practice. The archivist follows a series of processes to: assess the fonds’ archival value and its internal interrelations (archival appraisal); transfer it to the repository legally**

**(acquisition); and determine the interrelations and identify the parts of the archives to make their contents knowable by researchers (arrangement and description). Each of these steps has a body of theory and practices of archival repositories that are somewhat standardized but vary between institution. My general qualms about these steps or the tools for these steps are in their efforts to standardize and perhaps efface the personal rough edges while bringing the archives “under intellectual and physical control” (as we say in the biz).[4]**

SK: You have written, Catherine, about shedding the “authorial fallacy” of the archivist by leaving a trail of the thought process that went into the description and arrangement of archives. Embracing this human presence seems like an easy first step toward realizing a poststructuralist account of archives that is much like the move from history to historiography, where studies have shifted from a direct focus on the events of history, to a more interpretive account of the construction of those events as narratives with individual historians as their authors.

So, my own relationship to the archives, I decided, would be traceable, self-conscious, and open; but, the pervasive idea in some archival theory, that “all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures – pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history,” is a notion that positions the archivist somewhat anxiously (Burton, 6). At what point, I wondered, did I begin to separate History with a capital H from personal histories, pluralistic and unstable? What are the implications of this shift, and was it necessarily negative to imagine myself as a site where “specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures leave trace”?

From the outset, I was struck by the difficulty of putting to use some of the rich body of archival scholarship in the context of a writer’s records. While I found the deconstructive notion of all archives as “monuments to particular configurations of power” to be a useful way of troubling the historical position of the archivist as a kind of “gatekeeper,” I wasn’t entirely comfortable reducing the condition and

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..Our role is to interpret these fictional realms without pointing directly at authorial intentions for some stabilizing notion of "real" meanings. We learn to give thought to pauses, blank spaces, punctuation, and the inherent tension that words and language offer experience.

context of the acts of creation and of custodianship in the Vera archives to the underpinnings of power relations present in the lives of individuals. And while I love the “deconstructive possibilities” (and not to mention the exciting imagery) of riding “on the back of a tiger,” that (white) South African archivist Verne Harris has thrillingly articulated in his writing on deconstructive notions of archives, I am also struck by Spivak’s description of the dizzying affect of deconstruction: “The fall into the abyss of deconstruction inspires us with as much pleasure as fear. We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom” (*Of Grammatology*).

**CH: I think we are both aiming at personal, situation-specific feminisms as a reaction to broad stroke analyses, while at the same time heading for tactics that made use of these dizzying or intoxicating prospects. In the archival work, the personal situation and the personal aesthetic are productive destabilizing factors.**

SK: Yes, the personal can be read quite productively as reflective of larger power structures (à la Foucault and others), but I began to see that there is another aspect of the inclusions and exclusions that are involved in record keeping that cannot be framed in entirely the same terms – a human presence that cannot be stabilized easily. The “psychology of archives,” as you have written about so elegantly, is about reading what is included, excluded, excised, and restricted, as a reflection of the individual’s relationship to acts of documentation, and also as acts that are affected by personal relationships that often inform and give shape to the event of a record’s creation.

**CH: In the case of writers, this also invites a reading of the record as an extension of literary creations. An additional layer to the puzzle when dealing with literary archives is what does it mean to *do right by* this writer’s archives in terms of the writer’s literary approach and aesthetic?[5]**

**In the case of Yvonne Vera, she had a consciously postmodern feminist aesthetic, mobilizing silences and women's bodies in her fiction.**

SK: Vera's preoccupation with speech, silence, absence, naming, and not naming drew me to a critical approach that tries to reflect the complex authorship in the archives without closing off its interpretation. Determining distinct fonds and making title choices and series arrangements all try to stabilize authorial intentions, and in the case of Vera, these stabilizations are difficult to reconcile with her notion of memory, as expressed both directly and indirectly, in her writing: "Memory for me is the act of writing itself" (*Cooking Chameleons*, 6). In the personal archives of authors, as you have written, all acts of documentation have links to the creative process, since writers have a special relationship to language and writing that invites, in turn, creative reading. As literary critics and scholars, our role is to interpret these fictional realms without pointing directly at authorial intentions for some stabilizing notion of "real" meanings. We learn to give thought to pauses, blank spaces, punctuation, and the inherent tension that words and language offer experience.

The theme of silence and disclosure in Vera's texts is particularly important, where her dense poetic prose works through the tension of articulating new subjectivities in an environment characterized by possession. In Vera's unpublished manuscript, *Obedience*, the two central characters struggle to find a way of loving that does not possess the other, but they fail to disentangle their desires from their fears. Vera's writing enacts a politicized and poetic aesthetic of dispossession, as she writes against possession and reclamations of all kinds; whether of a people by their nation, women by men, children by their parents, or people by their past, Vera valorizes newness over old loyalties and frames of reference. The capacity for "departures," for newness, and the courage to leave behind possessions of all kinds is a central issue in Vera's oeuvre. The poetic tension here is palpable; how do you write into being that which is "without a name"?[6]

The implications for archival practice are charged with a similar sense of poetic (in) justice, since each item in the archives is a possession left behind by Vera that must, to some degree, be stabilized in the act of arrangement and description.

In this way, Vera's treatment of her subject guided the treatment of mine. The "creative archival turn" that you have identified, Catherine, was a wonderful articulation of my own interpretive impulses in this regard.

**CH: For me, this "creative archival turn" elicits what we might call the "joy of leaving it hanging," of the archivist making the gesture that throws up the details of a life and the aesthetic direction of the author together in a way that doesn't overwrite the myriad possibilities and spaces of archives. It presents these facets in their infinite reflection back to one another. Your archival acts try to retain Vera's freedom to be "in motion" (i.e. to be associated with silences and action and hopefully not pinned down by discourse). So, in the end, Sarah, it's been a really productive critical and mentoring moment for me. I hope very much that our *common threads* will lead us on to new discussions in the future.**

SK: Thank you, Catherine. I'm looking forward to more weaving and threading, too.

*For more information about the Yvonne Vera archives, please see: The Public Texts Program at Trent University.*

*Sarah Kastner's thesis is entitled "Writing Against Possession: Archiving Yvonne Vera, and the Obedience Manuscript."*

## End Notes:

[1] The Vera archives is arranged as two separate fonds: "The Yvonne Vera and John José fonds," and "The Mary Polito fonds."

[2] Maryanne Dever. "Reading Other People's Mail." *Archives and Manuscripts* 24.1. May 1996, p.120-123.

[3] Ai Wei Wei. *Ai Wei Wei's Blog: Writings, Interviews and Digital Rants 2006-2009*. MIT Press: Cambridge Mass., 2011, p.6.

[4] For a discussion of how archival arrangement and description may be seen to efface the personal see: Hobbs, "Personal Ethics: Being and Archivist of Writers" in Linda M. Morra and Jessica Schagerl eds. *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace*, WLU Press, 2012.

[5] Catherine Hobbs.

[6] Vera, Yvonne. *Without a Name*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.

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**Catherine Hobbs** has been the Literary Archivist (English-language) at Library and Archives Canada for fourteen years. She has dealt with LAC's tremendously rich collection of literary archives: including those from writers, small literary presses, editors and other figures and organizations involved in Canadian literature. She has worked with many contemporary women writers like Dionne Brand, Gail Scott, Phyllis Webb, Jan Zwicky and Daphne Marlatt. Catherine is Chair of the Special Interest Section on Personal Archives (SISPA) within the Association of Canadian Archivists. In 2011, Catherine was elected to the steering committee of the Section on Literary and Art Archives within the International Council of Archives and she recently proposed a project on dissident writers' archives to the section. Catherine is interested in artistic producers of archives as well as individuals' understandings of their own documentation. She has taught seminars and written groundbreaking articles on literary archives and personal archives, and she is associated with the Public Texts Program at Trent University.

**Sarah Kastner** is a PhD student in the English department at Queen's University. Her dissertation focuses on three authors, Yvonne Vera, Bessie Head, and Dambudzo Marechera, who blur the boundary between autobiography and fiction through a postmodern African aesthetic. Sarah's work explores the interrelatedness of biography, narratives of self, and the construction of identity in postcolonial and post-apartheid environments. During her Masters degree in the Public Texts program at Trent University, Sarah worked as an archivist to the personal papers of Zimbabwean author, Yvonne Vera. Her thesis, entitled "Writing Against Possession: Archiving Yvonne Vera, and the Obedience Manuscript," read Vera's archives through her subaltern approach to writing, and argued for a reading of her final unfinished novel that does not attempt to apprehend its complete state.



Box of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas personal effects, Carlton Lake Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Photograph courtesy of the Harry Ransom Center.

# Personal Effects: The Material Archive of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas's Domestic Life

*Ann Cvetkovich*

The photograph on the left shows a box of personal effects that once belonged in the household of Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein and are now housed in the Harry Ransom Center (HRC) at the University of Texas at Austin. Its publication in *No More Potlucks* constitutes a form of exhibition, and this accompanying essay could be considered a form of extended caption. My desire to write about the box of objects stems from my ongoing interest in the queer “archive of feelings,” but it also represents a bit of departure from my usual research habits and my previous attitude towards archives. When I wrote *An Archive of Feelings*, I was quite critical of institutional research archives such as the HRC because I felt that queer life lay elsewhere – in the stuff that would never be considered important enough to be collected by official institutions or in ephemeral experiences and feelings that couldn't be captured in an archive. But, inspired by artists who have been making creative use of the archives, I've been reconsidering my suspicion of conventional archives and returning to them myself in order to consider the value of elite and high literary archives for histories of queer intimacy and their everyday dimensions.

It's been easy enough to make this move since the Harry Ransom Center (HRC), which is right in my own backyard at the University of Texas, is a treasure trove for archives of high modernism, including ones that are lesbian and queer. I've gone there not so much in search of literary manuscripts and editions, a typical goal of archival research in such collections, but for traces of the cosmopolitan lifestyle that is their material foundation. The HRC's collections include Radclyffe Hall's scrapbook of clippings about the censorship of *The Well of Loneliness*, Sylvia Beach's subscription list for *Ulysses* and photos of her and Adrienne Monnier with their dogs and in their kitchen, and a file of Alice B. Toklas's recipes, some of them written in her own hand, for items such as white cake.

Ever since my HRC archivist friend Gabby Redwine first showed them to me because they happened to be sitting in her office, I have been particularly obsessed by five boxes containing the personal effects of Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein, which are part of the HRC's impressive Carlton Lake [collection of French modern literary materials](#). The boxes include a handkerchief delicately monogrammed with a "G," a hand towel decorated with a poodle appliqué, and stationery imprinted with a rose circled by the text "A Rose is a Rose is a Rose." Indeed, this "logo" appears to have been quite popular throughout the Stein-Toklas household; it also appears on a wax seal, a set of cocktail napkins, and as part of a wallpaper design, as though Stein's experiments in repetition were a brilliant slogan for merchandising experimental modernism. The pièce de résistance is a literal "tender button," a miniature cream silk pillow, nestled in a bed of green velvet, with the "Rose is a Rose" logo delicately stitched on it. Placed in beautifully crafted archival boxes and swaddled in pale tissue paper, these objects make it hard not to indulge in archival fetishism. (One box, for example, contains just a hat and a lampshade, whose coordinating textures and shades of brown and beige constitute a form of surrealist collage, as much a manifestation of modernism as Stein's written texts.)

My fascination with this archive of material objects and the feelings they evoke stems in part from a developing interest in Gertrude Stein's life in Paris – her queer relationship with Alice B. Toklas, her love for her poodle Basket, her status

as a secular Jew and American expatriate, her role as an art patron, and especially through her famous salons, her extensive social network with artists of all kinds, including the celebrated male geniuses Picasso and Hemingway, the many gay men with whom she collaborated, and her more distant relations with the lesbian bohemian circles around Natalie Barney. Although lesbian life in Paris has been a staple for many queer scholars, as well as a source of enduring fandom and fixation for amateur historians of queer culture – especially given the lure of the City of Lights both then and now – I have been a somewhat resistant latecomer to this world. The lesbians of the Left Bank often seemed too rich and privileged to be my gender and sexual role models. But, I ultimately found my way to them through Monique Truong’s historical novel *The Book of Salt*, whose point of departure is the brief account of Indochinese cooks in Alice B. Toklas’s famous cookbook. Truong’s rendering of the Stein-Toklas household through the perspective of an immigrant laborer who is himself queer offers a critical, although still loving, take on the eccentric American ladies, who are depicted as exoticizing the life of the man whose domestic labor supports their salon culture but also as largely oblivious to him. I like Truong’s transnational and queer version of Paris (as well as David Eng’s reading of it), which places its monied American expatriate artists in a context that includes colonial histories, racialized migration and labor, and multiple modernities.

Over time I have also been seduced into the Stein-Toklas archives by the ingenuity of queer scholars using them to excavate Gertrude and Alice’s relationship and their extensive social networks. My friend Kay Turner’s *Baby Precious Always Shines*, a collection of Toklas and Stein’s love notes from Yale’s Beinecke Library, makes a tour de force use of the archive to reconstruct their domestic life, and Esther Newton’s essay on her quest for a girlfriend like Alice makes a compelling case for butch-femme coupling as the ideal foundation for a creative life. Laying to rest any doubts about its putative imitation of heterosexual roles, Turner and Newton offer novel takes on what was distinctively queer about the Stein-Toklas “marriage.” José Muñoz testifies across race, class, and gender lines to a love for Gertrude as his “sapphic modernist hero,” and Heather Love describes the appeal of the “fancy” lesbians who served as a point of identification for her own upwardly mobile educational

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The visual archive of Stein's life not only reveals the domestic and social networks that accompany her legacy of written texts, but renders her more fully queer.

trajectory. In a revelatory trip to Gayle Rubin's personal archive (orchestrated by Love), I was amazed to see her collection of Ladies Almanack first editions and to learn that in her early 20s, she too had followed the tracks of Natalie Barney to Paris to study in the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale. This illustrious fan base (and debates about which salon is the most lesbian friendly) has encouraged me to drop my grumpy resentment. In recent years, I have also had the good fortune to spend some extended periods in Paris and have thus belatedly made pilgrimages to the sites that so many have visited over the years – the original location of Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier's Shakespeare and Company on rue de l'Odéon, Natalie Barney's home on rue Jacob, and, of course, Gertrude and Alice's salon at 27 rue de Fleurus (as well as their graves at Père Lachaise). Although I remain convinced that the point of following in search of lost salons is to make one's own, there is still work to be done in excavating the queer modernities embedded in the ephemeral everyday lives and social networks of the famous and elite in Paris.

What does an archive of objects add to the legacy of Stein and Toklas, which is already so richly available both in written and visual archives and on the streets of Paris? I was delighted to see my dream of exhibiting the material archive realized in the ["Seeing Gertrude Stein" exhibition](#), curated by Wanda Corn and Tirza True Latimer at San Francisco's Contemporary Jewish Museum (and also exhibited at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC). The visual archive of Stein's life not only reveals the domestic and social networks that accompany her legacy of written texts, but renders her more fully queer. Through photographs and paintings, Basket (and her successors) receive their due, including their own chapter in the catalogue's section on Stein at home. A vest from the HRC's collection was on display with a series of other garments as part of a discussion of how Gertrude and Alice transformed the conventions of female dress and how Stein established her own inimitable form of butch androgynous couture style to become a celebrity icon both then and now. Latimer and Corn show how Stein's creative output consists not just in her writing and other art productions but in her appearance, her friendship networks, and her domestic life with Alice. The exhibition makes imaginative use of photographs and other visual documents, along with the material artifacts that

conjure these ephemeral forms of creativity. (The minor objects and images of “Seeing Gertrude Stein” make for a telling comparison with the cultural cachet of the paintings by Matisse, Picasso, and other famous artists on display at the same time in San Francisco as part of “The Steins Collect,” an exhibition that also aimed to recreate the Stein family’s Paris salons.)

This is the kind of scholarship and exhibition that new archival work is making possible, guided by a sensibility that transforms the queer remnants of social worlds and publics into the object of archiving, exhibition, and history. Marked by the convergence of the affective turn and the archival turn, this strategy is also reflected in a range of very exuberant and utopian scholarly projects focused on the everyday life of queer affiliations and networks, especially those that link art, creativity, and cultural politics. In *All We Know*, Lisa Cohen compiles a collective biography of three minor figures – Esther Murphy, Mercedes de Acosta, and Madge Garland – through a creative approach to both archival research and writerly style that offers a queer modernism encompassing fashion, fandom, and failure. *The Last Nude*, Ellis Avery’s historical novel about the painter Tamara de Lempicka and her imagined lesbian affair with the woman who posed for her paintings, presents a revisionist queer history of Paris in the 1920s. Like Paris in the 1920s, New York in the 1960s is a focal point for explorations of how bohemian art cultures have fostered queer ways of living in scholarship by José Muñoz and Ann Reynolds, among others, on the queer circles around Andy Warhol, but also those around supposedly more minor figures such as Jack Smith and Ray Johnson. A taste for queer collectivity also guides Lisa Moore’s study of the eighteenth-century sister arts of poetry, visual art, and landscape gardening, which provides an earlier history of how friendships and salons enabled creativity in multiple genres and media. The archives used to reconstruct these histories are often unorthodox, including gossip, hunches, and fantasy, as well as queer readings of more traditional archival artifacts. And the minor figures being constructed as part of these histories, such as the collage artist Mary Delany, the British Vogue editor Madge Garland, or quirky correspondence artist Ray Johnson, were not only part of friendship networks whose reconstruction offers new understandings of the relation between art and politics, but were themselves

archivists, antiquarians, and collectors of various kinds, whose creative work itself gives rise to new theories of the archive.

I love to imagine that domestic objects, such as Gertrude and Alice's napkins, hand towels, and wallpaper, could lend themselves to histories of the intimate lives of lesbians, both famous and not so famous, including demystifications of the domestic such as in *The Book of Salt's* focus on racialized labor. These objects offer testimony to social relations – the cocktail napkins and hand towels for entertaining guests, the wax seals and engraved stationery that enhance correspondence, the décor of the room that provides space for the salon. Moreover, it's the box itself as much as the objects in it that fascinates me, the care with which potentially minor objects are preserved and framed as important. The charm of the archival object resides not only in its material and indexical relation to the social but also in its muteness, which merely hints at the stories it might tell. Even if we are allowed to touch the tender button, the miniaturized fetish whose text is barely visible, we are connected to a magic that cannot fully be named.

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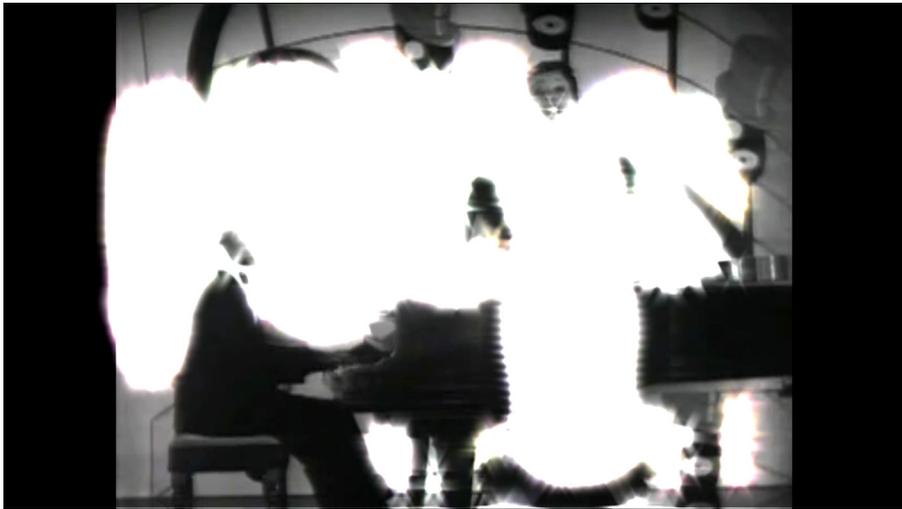
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Ann Cvetkovich was interviewed by Tracy Tidgwell in NMP 3: Ego: [The Doctor Is In: Ann Cvetkovich](#)



# Fluid Locations: Discussing Archives and Representation with Sonia Boyce

Sally Frater

Fluid Locations: Discussing Archives and Representation with Sonia Boyce – Sally Frater

*Sonia Boyce in collaboration with Ain Bailey, Oh Adelaide, 2010; single screen video with sound, 7 min, 12 sec.; courtesy of the artist.*

*Sonia Boyce is an internationally renowned multi-disciplinary artist who lives and works in London, England. In 2010, together with sound artist Ain Bailey, Boyce collaboratively produced the work Oh Adelaide, a video/sound piece which developed from a found film clip sourced from the Internet of the late performer Adelaide Hall performing “Creole Love Call.” The original clip, after passing through the hands of Boyce and Bailey, has been transformed into something that is haunting, ethereal, and dream-like in character. The work was included in the exhibition There is no archive in which nothing gets lost, which was recently held at the Glassell School of Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, in Houston Texas. The exhibition, which also featured video works by Wangechi Mutu and Lorna Simpson, explored the intersection of place, narrative, history, representation, performance, and “the archive”. Boyce graciously agreed to speak with me about Oh Adelaide and its inclusion in the exhibition at the Glassell School of Art. Below is a truncated transcription of a two-hour, trans-Atlantic dialogue that occurred over Skype in which we discussed Oh Adelaide and its inception as well as the work’s relationship to larger issues of the “archive”, history, and representation.*

Sonia Boyce: You know that I used to run an archive – the African and Asian Visual Artists Archive (AAVAA) at the University of East London? I was immersed in archival activities, and inevitably questions arose about the archive as an art practice. *Oh Adelaide* comes out of this.

**Sally Frater: How did you come across both the source material and then come to know the figure of Adelaide Hall?**

SB: It's a bit of a long story... Back in 1999, I was invited by FACT in Liverpool, which is the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, to work on their Collaborations Programme. They match artists with a community group in order to facilitate collaboration. I was placed with *Liverpool Black Sisters*. At the time I was also working at AAVAA with David A. Bailey, so I was already thinking about the archive and history, particularly in terms of sound and music. I wanted them (Liverpool Black Sisters) to do some research. I wanted them to research something they would be familiar with. I asked them about the first record they ever bought. Then I asked them to think of the names of all the black British female performers they knew. There was about 10 minutes of silence, as no one could remember anyone. It was quite awkward and then someone thought of Shirley Bassey and we started singing her songs. The group members began asking their friends and colleagues for more names, and what was originally intended to be a six-month project has grown into the *Devotional* series.

Adelaide Hall wasn't in that first grouping. The list has grown exponentially over the years – people still send me names. I created a drawn installation in 2007 of 180 names at the National Portrait Gallery, with a budding curator Eddie Otchere. Eddie put me in touch with Stephen Bourne, who has done a lot a research on 20th century black performers, and it was Stephen who introduced me to Adelaide Hall. He is a self-taught theatre historian; Stephen's story is very interesting actually; his aunt was adopted into his family and she was black. She was born at the turn of the century. Stephen's family is white working class, and his aunt worked in a dress-making shop. She started to work for Elisabeth Welch. I presume you know who

Elisabeth Welch is? [Sally Frater: No.] Elisabeth came to the UK from the USA. She was an African-American who made a film 'Song of Freedom' in the UK in 1936 with Paul Robeson. She was an actress and a singer and like Adelaide Hall they were both part of that pre-World War II set of black international theatre, film, song and dance performers.

Anyway, getting back to this question of gathering material, people kept sending me names and the thing kept on growing and the archive began to take root. So that's how the collecting of names and items unfolded. People started to send me things. Once I started to accumulate the names and the items it was a question of what to do with them. There are now around 270 names that date back from the end of the 19th century into the 21st century. I started to make work from it, and realised that in order to really activate the collection I should invite others to create works with me.

**SF: How did the collaboration with Ain Bailey come about?**

SB: I've known Ain (she is one of the named performers in the *Devotional* roll-call) for many years, and I asked her if she'd like to try and collaborate on making a work from the collection. We put Adelaide Hall's name into Google and the film footage that is the source for the art work is what came up and I thought, "I want to use that."

Many of the performer's names that have been sent to me I didn't know, I didn't know who they were. I used the Internet as a research tool to get an artist's biography. In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida speaks about amnesia and how the archive is a system for forgetting. Over the years, as I've tried to research the names sent to me it has been interesting to note whose stories have reached the Internet and whose have not. For some performers there is very little information. It's really interesting to know, because the Internet is seemingly democratic.

**SF: The interplay between the two components of the work, the visual and the aural, and the distortions which occur in each, lend the work a feeling of displacement at being outside of time and make it difficult to locate oneself in it. By the same token, the resulting collage of the fragments of performance that Bailey has used to compile the sound piece connect the piece to the work of other artists in the *Devotional* series and to many other histories a larger narrative of history. How do you feel about *Oh Adelaide* being fused with these other histories?**

SB: First of all, one of the things that I should say about the *Devotional* collection is that many of the named performers would probably hate being collected under that rubric. The activity of collecting is not on their behalf, its not to represent them. It's really about an unplanned way that a diverse range of public listeners have built a collective memory. *Oh Adelaide* is symptomatic of this collective memorialisation. I suspect, that many of the early performers, or even some of the performers now, would not really be happy about being collected under the category of "black female performers". *Oh Adelaide* is a collage, it is a cut and paste, it is a digital mash up, where vision and sound sit awkwardly side-by-side – sometimes synchronised, sometimes not. I love that Ain's haunting soundtrack trawls through many musical genres as she cuts and rewinds, makes indecipherable as music, and creates an aural wallpaper, yet none—except the clarity of *Creole Love Call*—is a discernible song, just pure atmosphere.

**SF: Within the work I thought that there was a suggestion of the importance or perhaps necessity of introducing or involving the "imaginary" when we approach or investigate history or histories. Do you feel that this is a valid claim to be making of the work and or your approach?**

SB: I wanted to look at the documentary photograph as a starting point but not an end point. Rather than saying we have to have a reverential treatment of the document I wanted to think about how we make use of it now? Do I have to treat it as if it is dry archival material or can it have another life? In addition, the original

footage has these very troubling images: caricatures, like minstrels, that I thought, “I can’t live with these as they are, I have to do something to it!” I know the imagery is of its time, but still, to our sensibilities, the image of the minstrel does not sit well.

Actually, being troubled by the past’s imagery became a moment of epiphany. Just the very act of putting something in the archive, suggests its future use is beyond the control of the past... we don’t have to settle for the past as it is presented. The past is not fixed. This question of playing with history comes out of not settling... this idea that we are supposed to learn or just accept it, that doesn’t mean that we have to disrespect it but we don’t have to accept it as a given.

So, I decided that it was perfectly legitimate to treat this digital footage as pure material to be played with, as something elastic. So light and dazzling whiteness becomes the material presence that reveals and threatens to obliterate everything in its path, which Adelaide Hall and her accompanying pianist emerge and disappear within. As the audience, we’re urged to fight to keep track of her – to capture her.

**SF: What I thought was particularly interesting was the fact that the other works in the exhibition, Wangechi Mutu’s *Cutting* and Lorna Simpson’s *Corridor*, both were videos of performances that responded to a set of undisputed historical circumstances and in a sense became propositions for considering theses whereas your work stems from an actual archival footage but seems that much more surreal. Are you familiar with these works? If so can you address this idea?**

SB: I’ve seen clips of their works online but I only really knew about them through the exhibition. I was struck by the particularity of place. That place was being performed as much as the figures within the space. I suppose with *Oh Adelaide*, it slips in and out of place. I was struck by the particularity of place that was being performed. I really think that this was interesting. I thought that *Oh Adelaide* was going to look really awkward next to the two other works because you could

not say where it was from. With Simpson's and Mutu's works, I felt a defiance – something adamant about being in that place, in quite a radical way. This house is my house, this earth is my earth. In their works there seemed to be a claiming of place and an claiming of space and in a way, I suppose that *Oh Adelaide* takes Adelaide Hall out of a place, she becomes transient on the screen... with Wangechi's piece, there is a place but you don't know where that place is. The question about ownership, I don't know that ownership is the word. Laying claim is probably the word that exists between the three works. I was struck by a confidence of both figures in those spaces. A "right to be" confidence.

Place and a claim on space, are interesting questions within a context of thinking about black diasporic experiences. And particularly if I think about the *Devotional* project as a whole, it is entirely about migratory networks, of the performers being or coming from several places, yet finding themselves in the UK. And, if I think back to my growing up period, and particularly this question of laying claim to a British identity was an ambivalent experience. The migratory experience is somehow located across these three works... The exhibition is maybe talking about the differences within diaspora. There are three very distinct diasporic experiences.

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**Sally Frater** is an independent curator and writer. She holds an Honors BA in Studio Art from the University of Guelph and an MA (with Distinction) in Contemporary Art from The University of Manchester and Sotheby's Institute of Art. In her curatorial practice she is interested in exploring issues of identity, history, memory, environmental criticism as well as issues of representation and equity in gallery and museum practices. She has curated exhibitions for the Glassell School of Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2012) Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto (2012), Georgia Scherman Projects in Toronto, Ontario (2012), The Print Studio in Hamilton, Ontario (2010) Art Gallery of Peterborough (2010), A Space Gallery in Toronto, Ontario (2006, 2008), and the McMaster Museum of Art in Hamilton, Ontario (2005, 2006). Her

writing has appeared in catalogues for the Studio Museum in Harlem, The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, NKA, Prefix Photo, Border Crossings magazine, C Magazine, Fuse, Blackflash Magazine, Women and Environments International and Canadian Art. She has presented at conferences at Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario, Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario and McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. She has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council and has served on juries for the Ontario Arts Council, and the Houston Arts Alliance. A member of IKT and ICI (Independent Curators International) she is currently a Core Critical Studies Fellow at the Glassell School at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and a resident at Project Row Houses, Houston.

**Sonia Boyce** came to prominence in the early 1980s as a key figure in the burgeoning black British art-scene of that time – becoming one of the youngest artists of her generation to have her work purchased by the Tate Gallery, with paintings that spoke about racial identity and gender in Britain. Her works have subsequently been purchased by several public collections. Since the 1990s Boyce's practice has taken a more multi-media and socially inclusive approach to bridge cultural differences. Since 1983, Boyce has exhibited extensively throughout the UK and internationally. Exhibitions and monographs include: *Sonia Boyce: Speaking in Tongues*, (Gilane Tawadros, Kala Press 1997), *Annotations 2/Sonia Boyce: Performance*, (Mark Crinson, Iniva – the Institute of International Visual Arts 1998); *Video Positive: the other side of zero*, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool (2000); *Recent Sonia Boyce: la, la, la*, Reed College, Portland – Oregon (2001); *Century City: art and culture in the modern metropolis*, Tate Modern, London (2001); *Sharjah International Biennial 7*, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2005); *Devotional*, National Portrait Gallery, London (2007); *Crop Over*, Harewood House, Leeds and Barbados Museum & Historical Society (2007/2008), *For you, only you* (Paul Bonaventura, Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art, Oxford University and tour 2007/2008), *Praxis: Art in Times of Uncertainty*, Thessaloniki Biennial 2, Greece (2009); *Like Love*, Spike Island, Bristol and tour (publication by the Green Box Press, Berlin, 2010); *Afro Modern*, Tate Liverpool and tour (2010); and, *The Impossible Community*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2011).