# Keepers of Memory: Creativity, Reimagination, and Multiplicities in the Archives

Meredith Leigh Ahmed Art History Senior Seminar Dr. Robert Miller "To build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination."

- bell hooks, Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope

"The sense of time must no longer be that of the moment or the next harvest, but rather that of the rest of the world."

- Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

#### Introduction

Archives are safeguarded, defined by a colonial memory, and attached to institutions restricting access. Archives must continue to break down barriers to become more equitable and community-oriented. By expanding the lens to include community members and treating archivists as artists, we can further unravel and understand the narratives that lie within. Archives are not neutral, and the role of archivists should be continually questioned. How do they uphold institutional memory or create narratives amongst the resources? Additionally, by expanding the framework around how art is understood, they can emphasize creating new and unique representations using archival documents.

The erasure of violence and upholding state and institutional power occur in the archive, where a monopoly between the archivist and perceived narrative begins. To communally understand the past, there can be no singular authoritative, just communion with the past through archival documentation and descriptions. Imagination is critical to breaking outside of archival boundaries. In addition, imagination can assist in redeveloping disciplines such as art-ultimately reshaping the goals and reports of the archivist. Archives are essential to better serve the needs of the general public with the ultimate goal of making archives more accessible and impartial.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Hooks, Bell. 2003. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. 36.: Routledge.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The wretched of the earth.* Translated by Constance Farrington. 46.: Grove Press.

Creating history and reimagining archives can uniquely forge links between marginal communities left out of archives and expand knowledge to undertake institutional changes. The archive's memory must be challenged and liberated from institutional barriers limiting access and shaping narratives. This institutional memory upholds the colonial memory of the archives—a created space where communities are deprived of proper accreditation. Our imaginations are paramount to representing history that has been reprised and undervalued by scholarship. This liberation of the archives is possible and necessary to develop more culturally cognizant methods to allow communities to see themselves accurately represented in the modern practices, trends, and traditions that began in *their* backyards; the beauty of this reclaimed work is for everyone.

This thesis explores the past's multiplicities and how archives retain and support state-led dominance. Reapproaching archives with a unique perspective based on artistic practice can be reshaped as accessible, ethical, and community-oriented to serve the needs of scholars, artists, and the general public. A new tradition can be created by examining traditional and limited archival practices. One that exemplifies community orientation and stewardship, the role of creativity in producing archives, and removing institutional barriers. Archives are not a singular story; they are complex sources of memory that would thrive under the unfettering of their contents. The archive's liberation, imagination, and uplifting of anarchist values is a beautiful tool and offers the opportunity to reclaim our histories from the memory of the institutions.

#### What are Archives?

The archives are hard to define, even for someone who has spent hours working in archives and alongside archivists. They are places full of emotions, both joy and contention. Philosopher Michel Foucault analyzes this complexity stating:

The archive is the first law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accurately endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance

external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from far off, while others that are in fact close to us already growing pale.<sup>3</sup>

In this quote, Foucault is toying with how archives can be concisely defined, but their existence shifts through areas of the world, institutions, and the archives themselves. Archives are privy to time; they are not isolated bodies. The standard view of archives may appear as shelves of acid-free gray boxes lined with pale yellow folders marked with graphite; even to me, this remains my first manifestation. This space can feel stern, desolate, and lacking inventiveness. The physicality of the archive is different from what defines it. In reality, the archive is complex and nuanced. But they are far more than their physicality; archives shape identity and memory. On the surface, their purpose is to organize and concisely safeguard materials. But, in reality, "They do not and cannot represent complete stories, but the distilled narratives they propose contain the most treasured and the most contested facets of identity, national or otherwise."<sup>4</sup> While this quote explicitly refers to museums, understanding the multifaceted identity of collection spaces, including archives, is an excellent phrasing. This phrasing reminds us that the origins of archival collections and the documentation are ambivalent, undecided, and born from a vast set of lived experiences. This can also ground our ideas in historical legacy, that every reality we encounter trails a history behind it.

Archives are viewed as narrow places of stability, filled with objective historical truth. In reality, the archives are unstable, with competing narratives. To be later explored is the role of archivists themselves and how through their work are viewed with a specific measure of authority—they are the keeper of memory. The archive has a prominence, as other disciplines

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language, p. 129

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Procter, Alice. 2021. The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums & why We Need to Talk about it. 5.: Cassell.

have turned to it to answer their questions regarding identity, memory, and power. The role of the archivist cannot be overstated in the entire process, as both the archival process and the documents contained within are inherently human. It is without saying that archivists have their own implicit bias, which is critical to remember because archivists must decide what to keep, how to describe it, how to balance privacy and access—and how to improve upon or correct their predecessors' decisions. So, what is an archivist? As previously mentioned, the archivist's role is continually overlooked—viewed as a passive intermediary between records and historians who interpret them. Nevertheless, their role is not passive, and archivists' labor impacts memory, identity, and power in concrete ways. This colonial construction of the archive dictates that the people responsible for maintaining and providing access to records were not seen as actively intervening in shaping history. "Impartiality" as a value reinforces the idea that archives represented "natural" power relations and obscures the decision-making and labor that went into archives. The archivist dictates each step of the archival process. Records are not just "discovered" but are created around the context it is placed in, how it is described, and why it is crucial. These decisions have compounded over decades, creating gaps in the historical record. This is why the question of who controls the archive is required. State-held power also constructs this record, often before it can be considered for preservation. In this early history, archivists may even believe that the documents stemming from bureaucratic power are an objective way to legitimize the past. In reality, this leaves out a bulk of the human narrative, resulting in the loss of evidence of the daily lives of entire communities. There is a duality between institutional and community memory, but archives do not have to be limited through state or institutional power. Their reimagination can be based on diversity through the lens of artistic imagination.

## **Expanding Imagination**

Artists and archivists are viewed through an objective dichotomy. Artists demonstrate creativity, free thinking, and imagination. But archivists are seen as being synonyms with bureaucracy. This abject is a division of labor between conformity and nonconformity. But, this spectrum is limited—how can we reimagine these positions to create a new archive? Stemming from this is the belief that art can be redefined. The purpose of redefining the artistic practice is to view it through a more innovative and interdisciplinary lens. Additionally, how can barriers be removed when working within archives? At what point is someone considered a historian? The institutional barriers surrounding archival spaces also dictate who can participate in disciplines. The archives were not designed to call into question the idea of falsely held power. But through each of us, as we carry our history and collective memories, there can be a broadened sense of who is included in the archival record. Collective memory is shared by each of us, who think and document our daily lives (this remains more true with the growth in technology). In a maximalist mindset, this declaration can consider everyone a historian, meaning to begin to empathize and understand everything within its historical context.

The archival association with bureaucracy and state power can be overhauled using artistic practice during archival induction. Incorporating artists into archives is one method to challenge state power. Though it is difficult to describe the magnitude of author Frantz Fanon's writing, Fanon, in his authoritative text, *The Wretched of The Earth*, explores the relationships between communism, artists, and the relegation of state-held power. This relationship is a contested one between colonized people and culture. To the colonized people, this culture has no indigeneity. But, it is a culture composed of techniques and language from the occupier.

Reframing the definitions of art and including these new definitions in archives will support a political struggle *against* the bureaucratic and colonized temperament of the archive.

This creator who decides to portray national truth turns, paradoxically enough, to the past and so looks at what is irrelevant to the present. What he aims for in his inner intentionality is the detritus of social thought, external appearances, relics, and knowledge frozen in time. The colonized intellectual, however, who strives for cultural authenticity, must recognize that national truth is, first and foremost, the national reality. He must press on until he reaches that place of bubbling trepidation from which knowledge will emerge. <sup>5</sup>

Here, Fanon is not relegating our artistic imagination to the future but is expanding that definition to help us understand how the multiplicities of the past are essential to our culture, now and in the future. Archives hold a singular narrative. But, the reality of archives allows us to imagine our histories holistically. Yet, scholarship and our historical imaginations still need to be expanded by rejecting current models of the singular archive. "The educated circles go ecstatic over such careful renditions of the truth, but we have every right to ask ourselves whether this truth is real, whether in fact it is not outmoded, irrelevant, or called into question by the heroic saga of the people hacking their way into history" (Fanon, 1963. Pg, 162). Here, Fanon again calls our attention to the idea of a singular narrative that yields a sole hero. Contesting the existing forms of history writing and adapting to being imaginative and creative in scholarship practices can reveal a more truthful past— even if it's demanding. A nourished and empathetic society is born using archives, historical scholarship, and active, imaginative thinking.

Additionally, it can allow us to conceptualize how the present and future can be more equitable for all that history has oppressed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Frantz Fanon, 1963. *The wretched of the earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. 161-164.: Grove Press.

#### **Dominance in The Archives**

Dominance is present both in archives and in those creating the sources. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, outlines the four moments encountered in historical documentation and how silences can persist in each step:

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments. The moment of fact creation (the making of sources), The moment of fact assembly (the making of archives), the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives), and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance).

The protective boundaries of the archive, previously supported by a seemingly one-dimensional practice, have begun to fall. Yet, Trouillot's writing reminds us that centuries of silence have compounded, and relearning history from our current perspective approaches impossibility. The archive has looked outward to position itself to have a subjective and proactive method, with gaps in the narrative becoming more prominent. Archives have been shaped by imperialism for most of the population; namely, BIPOC+ communities' archives appear very different. Documentation for people of color and birth, death, and marriage certificates are limited. The family tree is disrupted, and photos are often non-existent. We cannot separate the archive from politics, which centers on its relationship to information and knowledge production. Because of its inherent ties to politics and fact creation, the archive's information control has often been used to maintain the power of privileged groups in society. Like all politics, the politics of the archive is rooted in power and the selection of power. Remembering can be selective, Michel Rolph Trouillot teaches us in his seminal text Silencing the Past. Knowledge is power, but history is the fruit of power; whoever wins, in the end, gets to frame the story. Archives thus express an "exercise of power – power over information and the power of information institutions." In this sense, archives are positioned as spaces with the power to exclude discursively and physically.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," 9

Creating archives as an inclusive repository is critical and allows for expanded access to documents held and information dissemination more broadly and innovatively. Archival power is domination, meaning relying on archives attached to state bureaucratic narratives. Voices in the archives are not singular, and multiplicity should be embraced. As stated, history is an imaginative process involving thinking about the past and telling a story. We need widespread participation in archives from communities and localities. The system of representative democracy is not designed to accommodate people's positions in power. Though the archivists may have a simple job attached to systems of bureaucracy, any level of power in the system is connected to greater access and benefits. This is a hierarchical system of democracy, which cannot be realized until there is meaningful and substantial participation. This basis of community integration into archival spaces is based on cooperation, complementation, and solidarity. Lastly, this participation should be separate from bureaucratic structures. Still, as historians and archivists, we should encourage communities to self-organize and maximize traditional processes of historical documentation to protect and advance their interests and traditional networks.

#### **New Methods of Archival Practice**

Reimagining archives can be done with sensitivity and respect for the archival process while still undoing years of systematic preservation that upholds colonial narratives. "Community archiving is a process that can be self-defined or self-identified, such as in cases of human rights abuse, initiated by an individual or group without professional oversight or sponsorship by institutional archives.<sup>7</sup>." Community archiving is a framework for managing records using community-learned knowledge and discourse. Often community archiving is the basis for archival activism; its goal is to shift the focus of archival knowledge from traditional

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> "SAA Dictionary: community archives." n.d. Dictionary of Archives Terminology.

historical narratives to a survivor-centered approach to archival records. This method argues that survivors should have control of the decision-making processes in the early stages of archival documentation. We can find multiplicity in community archives, reimagined by a collective to serve us all better. As previously established, archives are a monolithic and singular body derived from Westernized bureaucracy. The rise of community archives has transformed how collective memories are curated, recapturing forgotten and suppressed voices, reshaping our view of what archives are and how they function, and challenging old assumptions about the role of professionals in mediating and sharing common heritages. The essential element of community archiving is just that, community. Artists are crucial community members, and their work can allow ownership over personal histories, expertise, and knowledge. The breakdown of institutional barriers is essential; as the role of archivists, researchers, and the general public have begun to merge, these spaces have become more porous. This goal is precisely what community archives seek to do, adding previously excluded voices, memories, and shared interpretations of our shared historiography.

Moreover, collaborative dialogues can be built by expanding participatory roles in archives, including people such as artists. This social activism and community self-organization is the distinguishing feature of the community archive. Establishing new methods of archival documentation has been a topic of interest in the archival sphere, and words such as 'decolonization' are tossed about. However, in recent years, historically left out of archives, marginalized groups have forged new paths by creating models of accessible archiving. One example of this is The South Asian American Digital Archive or SAADA. Michelle Caswell,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Caswell, Michelle. "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Importance for Researching Situations and Situating Research', in Gilliland, Anne J., McKemmish, Sue and Lau, Andrew J. (eds) Research in the Archival Multiverse, Clayton: Monash University Publishing, pp 31–73.

co-founder of SAADA and author of *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work*, describes the unique process: "SAADA is a post-custodial digital-only archive, meaning that, rather than accepting custody of materials, we borrow physical materials, digitize them, return them, and steward digital surrogates." A post-custodial model can help keep materials where they were born and within the community, allowing people most relative to the material to maintain access. In addition, communities themselves can provide valuable insight overlooked in the accessioning process. SAADA is an example of an alternative to traditional custodial repositories. Although the option can acknowledge that the historiography of people of color has Been harmful, seeking different approaches to silence can assist in preserving narratives. The Nomadic Archivist Project states that including community building is a crucial part of the archival practice and that items of historical importance and removal are optional for preservation. Typically archival repositories become the owner of physical or digital items; having physical ownership is an exaltation of power. 10 Thus, silences can occur more frequently because those closest to the material cannot access them. As reflected in the two previous examples, the internet can be a liberating tool for collecting and sharing archival information. New digital databases have garnered father reach and contain a greater variety of narratives.

Traditional archives privilege the written record, but for many left out of archives, their value is placed outside of just the written word. The United States occupies Indigenous land, where rituals and traditions have withstood countless transformations through their assimilation to the US and back. This recognition is essential as archivists have negated personal responsibility for the genocide of Indigenous people. But, to make archives more accessible and equitable, we must steadfastly prioritize Indigenous people in the ownership of their histories. Communities' archives assist in re-telling history, and all have proper re-appropriate control. The extension to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Donnell, Quajay. 2020. "Archival-Futurism: Archives as Social Justice." Nomadic Archivists Project.

write one's own story falls to many groups. Traditional repositories exclude or ignore the history of Indigenous peoples in the colonized territory. As previously mentioned, archives privilege the written word and don't acknowledge oral memories, folktales, performances, or stories. Archives can change by modeling methods through the perspectives of other communities as they are traditionally viewed as bureaucratic and military state power filing cabinets. But, the grassroots origins of archives can generate new ways of thinking about the library, its nature, and its potency as a source of shared and fluid historical narrative. Before archival attachment to institutions, archivists existed through oral storytelling–helping to narrate and combine history, art, and cultural traditions. Such activities unmake ownership traditions and disrupt traditional architectures and curatorial orthodoxies. Community archives illuminate and reshape the colonial nature of conventional archives, and as a result, they blossom into growing areas of research and interconnectivity.

### **Artist Archives**

Archives can be a source of advocacy for artists; they can act as a contemplative model for planning and responsibly caring for one's work. American painter and arts educator Squeak Carnwath states, "None of us get out of this world alive. And all we leave is a body of work. Actually, three bodies: 1. The Artwork, 2. The Archives, and 3. Our physical bodies." Archiving is essential for many reasons; while it is true that most artists need to be better known and will never have their work hanging in a museum, their work remains critical. Therefore, learning good archiving practices is essential, especially for young artists. An artistic legacy is a great opportunity in life. Artistic legacies create that can outlive us for years to come. But, artwork does not speak for itself, and without good archiving practices, when the artists die, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Borowiecki, Karol J., Forbes, Neil and Fresa, Antonella (eds) (2016) Cultural Heritage in a Changing World

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Carnwath, Squeak. 2020. "Questions We Need to Ask- And Answer." pg 21-25

meaning is divorced from the object. Visual culture, just like archives, should not consist of a singular narrative. But art history is plentiful, everchanging, and overflowing with diverse voices. Preserving these voices today creates a more prosperous future and a greater understanding of cultural history tomorrow.

Artist archives, mainly when contained in museums, can look quite different when compared to an institutional or state-held archive. As a repository, the museum archive holds challenging non-traditional material with no other place. But, as previously discussed, collecting practices are evolving, and the value parameters are changing. In addition, artists are valuable in archival discourse, encouraging archives to be functional and flexible spaces to allow for new interpretations of what an archive can be. Though overlooked as a source of creativity, archives are fluid and ever-changing and serve the role of social functionality and maintain a collective memory. 13 "Archives are not passive storehouses of old stuff, but active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, and confirmed. By extension, memory is not something found or collected in archives but made and continually re-made. 14" This re-imagination does not exclude but amplifies artists' indispensable role as cultural translators within the community. As previously mentioned, the archive appears to us as an undefinable body, as definitions cannot convey the complexities and ruminations on the subject. However, as an artist, there is a reference point for how archives can be creatively charged and inspire my work. Archives serve as a contextualization for the art we encounter. Often in museums, the artwork is removed from its contextual history and hung in galleries with a simple blurb or biographical statement about the artist. This experience can be more enlightening by utilizing archives, as archival materials give insight into the artists, their processes, and the lives behind their artwork. We know more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Foster, Hal. "An Archival Impulse." October 110 (2004): 5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Cook & Schwartz, 2002, 172)

about the materials and techniques of that time, what that society valued, what was inspiring and new, and what the culture was thinking about on a larger scale. Archives are an institutional force many artists use to change this precedent.

Artists can begin making archives holistic through their work–by disrupting, appropriating, interpreting, reconfiguring, and reimaging what an archive can be. Artists influence how, why, and what archivists collect, preserve, and contextualize into archives. The role of the archivists is not exclusionary; their part is to influence scholars and artists. For archivists, working with artists can re-contextualize historical materials, call attention to omissions, and introduce collections to new audiences. Art offers a unique means of exploring history's resonance in the present day, instigating intimately personal experiences, and generating dialogue. When artists interact with archives, they may not know the traditional archival practices or the designated steps to conventional archives. But that is important–artists are not concerned with traditional accumulation, sorting, interpreting, or the legacy of archival production. Instead, they are interested in how archival materials can be transformed and utilized for aesthetic principles. There is variety in how artists approach archives; by working through their life histories, artistic desires, and conceptual ideas, we are illuminated by an archive that confronts its very nature and the relationships it holds between trauma, time, public information, and memory.

#### **Art from The Archive**

Using art, and the influences of artists, archivists can be more grounded in their use of imagination and more communally oriented. The history of art is dynamic and inherently political; its politicization should not be separated from creativity. To speak truth to false power and exonerate our histories from institutions, we must creatively delve into solutions that actively

engage in the past but also creatively inspire us for a brighter future. *Exterminate All the Brutes* is an artful, painful, and immersive film created by Raoul Peck. This film gathers a set of historical atrocities of vast geographical and chronological scope—the colonization of the New World employing the genocide of Native Americans, the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, the imperial conquest of Africa by European powers, and the Holocaust—and traces their inextricable connections, their shared theme of white supremacy. He eloquently summarizes the necessity behind giving truth to false power and how cultural translators mediate change. Peck states:

Historical narratives are a particular buddle of silences, an exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others. In this fabricated narrative, not all silences are equal. Our job as filmmakers, writers, historians, and image makers is to deconstruct these silences. <sup>16</sup>

This quote directly connects with the ideas between makers and archives and how they can affect colonial memory and a new version of history. As previously mentioned, artwork can unravel the archival narrative. Redaction, silences, and displacement exist in archives put forth by oppressors. Art is crucial for the archives, and this statement remains steadfast in the opposite way. As previously mentioned, by re-evaluating our definition of art to include all that is imaginative, we can see the wide breadth of the application of archives. Artists can appropriately interpret and reconfigure materials and the bureaucratic archival structure. Art and archives create a critical transaction predicated on the increased accessibility and historiographic awareness of the media in institutional repositories. Art gives a new language and simultaneously a new production and documentation. Additionally, art is a medium not barred by its institutional surroundings. Art is endlessly expandable and reproducible and can be used for many purposes.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Brody, Richard. 2021. "Exterminate All the Brutes," Reviewed: A Vast, Agonizing History of White Supremacy." The New Yorker.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Peck, Raoul, dir. 2021. Exterminate All the Brutes.

cultural understanding. These artistic purposes include—governmental propaganda, advertising, entertainment, and commemoration. Archives are not static but "burning with desire" to transpose historical narratives into beautiful prose. Our ability to imagine is tied to the exact mechanisms we use to return to the past, compiling indexes of ourselves and others- resulting in the ability to create and empathize.

Archives desire to categorize deeply, but art can be used to break these annotations of knowledge—art is wild and unvielding, constantly calling our attention. An archive is a colonial desire to describe our society and culture, but it appears fragmented. Artists interrogate this fragmentation, seeking to display what is missing. Additionally, this interrogation aims to understand archival documents' underlying use and multiplicities. Many artists are not concerned with simple accumulation or description of images—they are motivated by how archival legacies transform aesthetically. When artists adapt archives, we are confronted with what hides in its belly. Art liberates us to understand the archival relationship between time, trauma, memory, ethnography, and language. Most importantly, artists seek to understand the relationship between private memory and public knowledge. Art is a way to challenge the existing narrative, the archive is not ambiguous, and its role in defining public memory can be unsettled through multiple artistic interpretations—interpretations that know narrow disciplinary boundaries. Using items from an archive in visual media, we conceptualized the historical stability we are comfortable with and highlighted the inconsistencies that perforate our historiography. The collective artistic archive becomes a mnemonic reflection on history, building on the illumination of individual lives and experiences. Archives represent scenes of unbearable weight that can be a productive space for artists in the form of aesthetic, ethical, social, political, and cultural speculation. By encouraging and building art into archives, we can reckon with the semantic

reading of the archive and its properly situated historical present. The fascination with the archive, the immutable madness of the archive, and the constant return to it for verification, inspiration, and sources suggest a profound interest in the archival form and arts' relationship to historical reflections on the past.<sup>17</sup>

#### To Liberate

Concentrating energy promoting equity and inclusion is prioritized to produce a more comprehensive archive and, thus, a more comprehensive history. Reimagining archives means considering the affinities between communities and institutional repositories. Artists in archival practice can liberate cultural resources from barred institutions. Working across disciplinary sectors can illuminate critical thinking, resulting in emergent dialogues about the archive's role and function. Unfortunately, the colonial history surrounding our historiography limits this, placing borders around our disciplines and limiting our ability to imagine new futures. Imagination is vital as inspiration can be found in historical materials. Integrating a variety of perspectives can evaluate the archival processes and theories. Incorporating artists in archives allows for recognizing labor across both fields, esteeming each other as collaborators, and creating a common thread of understanding. This labor holds bias; by theorizing around the idea of labor, we can find how real-world conditions impact memory, identity, and power in very tangible ways. At the same time, archives have long characterized dominant perspectives, serving the interests of the powerful. Imagination, creativity, and art are a means for liberation. Imagination is essential for a world where this conversation is not radical and our disciplines, land, and history are not confined through borders. Instead, liberating the archive from its

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Enwezor, Okwui. 2008. Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art. Edited by Okwui Enwezor. 12-32

institution will qualify us to reckon with our shared communities and breathe new life into understanding history traversing decades.

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