

## Study room guide \*

“In search of a documentology. Walking (half) the study room”

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**October 2008**

*Q. How did this guide come about? A: Well, I am a lecturer of English Literature and Theatre in Italy, but I have always been attracted to the edges of the disciplines. Walking on the edges of theatre I found myself in performance studies. I virtually took up residence in the Study Room and that's how this guide came about. Q: You have lived here? A: Not quite but I've "haunted" the place for nearly six months. I enjoy its liminal space, and as an unusual academic I have found myself at home here. Q: Why choose the documents of Live Art instead of Live Art? A: Because most performance and Live Art I haven't seen live. This could be a problem. On the contrary, it has become my research. I have learnt this doing queer studies. Q: What's happening now? A: I am writing these few words, then I am going back to Italy and work at my book project on performative documentology. The way I see it is not just talking about documentation but also performing it, in different ways. And I am including performative installations, too. Q: Thank you.*

“Matter cannot so easily be separated from memory” (Gibson-Little, *n*)

### *A bit of foreplay*

Take a good look around.

This is going to be our field of play, a study room. Quiet and cosy, intended for browsing, watching, reading, looking. Anything that is done with your eyes.

Not to forget touching. You may take books, catalogues and magazines off the shelves, turn their pages, feel their texture. Pick up DVDs, CDs and VHS tapes, play them on either of the two monitors using the headphones provided. Anything that is done with your hands and ears.

You've probably come to the study room to find out more about Live Art. This is both the right and the wrong place to be. What you can see and touch here are just representations of it. These documents attest to the fact that Live Art has been and is being made, has been and is being recorded, remembered, written about. Can't you see? You are surrounded. This way you know and we know that Live Art exists or has existed. Somewhere else. These documents are a sort of guide to those “other” places and those “other” times. Taken as your guide, they are more likely to lead you to the ghosts of liveness than to Live Art itself. But this is not as bad a proposition as it sounds, and the trip will not be disappointing, though one that will always fail its destination. Being in turn just a shadowy guide to some of those guides, I cannot boast too much about the light I will be able to throw.

On the other hand, the study room, I find, is an excellent place to think about “documentology”. If only because documents here far outweigh Live Art, and they appear, unlike it, more tangible and weighty. However compelling your desire to meet Live Art, I would advise you not to take these documents for granted, as though they were a straightforward copy of some “original”. It is rather too tempting to overlook these material documents in your wish to delve deeper and get to the bottom of the “thing” itself (the performance). It is the latter, I know, you care about and want to meet. Maybe because you missed it the first time round (where were you?) and you want to get

another chance. These are all understandable reasons for wanting to look beyond the form of the document. If you struggle with the necessity of acknowledging documentation, maybe it is because you suspect that, like so many go-betweens, they both communicate and withhold, carry you closer to, but also keep you away from, the event. It's our nature. We meddle. We interfere.

Look at it another way. As the recording and archiving of Live Art has become more widespread, even the norm, being in the study room puts you in a position to acknowledge the cultural force of these mediations. Some of the easier assumptions about them will perhaps become less tenable once you have looked around: that they are transparent, for example, that they are or should be treated as invisible, no more than a necessary "evil", unworthy of a second look, of critical enquiry. As though to say, "I know it's not the real thing but it's as close now as I will ever get to it. Let's not waste time in foreplay, the bottom line is the performance".

Deferring your pleasure, I am going to take you for a walk stretching across (half of) this room, in search of a documentology gleaned entirely from the contents of the study room printed matter section. Not even all of it, just the P (for Publications) section. Your perambulations will be restricted to a few square feet of floor and wall space. Just a few steps will be enough for you to take in the impressive collection of words and images occupying the wall on the side of the entrance door. Now, we all know that the study room is deservedly famous for its VHS and DVD collection of recorded performances, spanning nearly fifteen years of British and international Live Art. Perversely enough, though, your guided walks are going to stop short of the opposite half of the room with its moving image documentation, where the real action is supposed to be "happening". Yours will be a lingering foreplay before submitting to your eager voyeur's desire. It may even pay off for some of you. The ones unhurried.

The relationship between Live Art performance and documentation has often been fraught and contested, yet also creative and constantly shifting. Reflecting on the status of the document has also broader implications related to issues of heritage and cultural transmission: crucial questions when it comes to the legacy and survival of time-based, site-specific forms of art and creativity. Not only that, they are issues that seem to invest no less than the ephemeral nature of everyday life and its problematic memorialization. The growing documentation of the study room is a powerful testimony, among other things, to our pressing desire to remember, to build an archive of memories against an unknown future. No small or negligible questions. All of which more than justifies the time wasted dwelling in foreplay.

Although the word "document" carries with it comforting associations of objectivity and stability, it is well to remember that the body of documents in this room is anything but fixed and restful. On the contrary, it is slowly, incessantly growing. In the few months that I have been away from this place one library shelf has already been filled with books, and even more shelves with DVDs. All the time whilst you are not looking the documents are growing around you. You are going to get swamped if you are not careful. By their silent growth you can gauge their liveness. Akin to a living, expanding organism fed by the hushed, mundane labour of storage and hoarding. Is the storage against better or worse times, I wonder? Two worlds are mirroring each other in a kind of shadowplay: the world of ongoing creation and expenditure out there – where Live Art is being made, consumed and inevitably missed – and the world of ongoing preservation and collection in here (though there is dispersal and loss, as well). The former world feeding this room until it spills out into other rooms.

You know this is not Live Art, yet you keep coming, unabashed. Are you prepared to meet the deathness of Live Art? In here the only live ones, discounting the barely noticeable growth of the archive, will be you. What is it in your being "live" that leads you back again and again to an

encounter with places like this, where liveness gets saved only through a certain loss? “Documentology” might be one name for thinking this in-between: the in-between that is liveness’s fascination with its past and future ghosts. Think of the study room as an interface for a strange gift economy. The documents of Live Art are plying their stilled availability (rewind/play back/reopen) pandering to your voyeuristic desire to see the “real thing”, beyond the mere representations of it.

You crave for the “Real” and the “Live” so much that you don’t mind its un-liveness, you no longer see it. Thanks to this vampirical exchange Live Art does indeed come to life –not to *its own* life, though: to *yours*. By living off each other the dead document and your live self have stepped into a third ground of loss-in-memory, of life-in-death. Your memory a marshland drip-fed by the performances you have seen live (seen out there) *and* by the performances you haven’t (seen in here). The study room hints at a pattern of osmotic circulation, a permeable exchange between the live and the recorded. The verb “to record” is indeed etymologically linked to the verb meaning “to remember”, “to commit to heart”. The operations of culture, too, can be seen in terms of exchange and trade-off, by which it persists while also becoming other to itself, same and different. Equally, Live Art gets remade all the time by exchanges such as the one in which you have become willingly involved. A (fore)play with no consummation in sight.

### *Nine one-foot-long walks, some homework, and nine (book) chains* \*\*

**Walk 1:** Past the door, three steps to your right.

Bend down and pick up item P0214, Simon Perril, *Tending the Vortex: the Works of Brian Catling*. A book with few images, overwhelmed by a lot of words, it is a mix of “book reviews, eyewitness accounts of performances, interviews, scholarly articles, written versions of talks”, as though to explore the wildly different formats of what documentation means and how it may be done. Catling speaks here at length of his work as an avoidance of product. Go to p. 24: “The memory of the viewer is the museum of curation, most of the work being unmovable and unownerable, umbilically soldered by intention to place”. Sit down on the dark blue sofa and think of yourself as *your own* study room, as the curator of your own performance memories. Suddenly your relation to this place will start changing. You will leave now. At home you will write three paragraphs about your oldest memories of a performance, inspired by another page (which you haven’t read yet) saying that documentation is like a returning ghost.

**Chain** ➡ P0384, Brian Catling, *The Blindings* expands on writing as post-performance artist’s documentation ➡ P0585, Bock and Vincenzi, *Invisible Dances...From Afar. A show That Will Never Be Shown*: a performance in a “darkened” theatre for no audience, only a “watcher”, a “medium”, a hearing (but not seeing) “witness”, and a photographer. A transcript of an “impossible spectatorship” not sure of what it sees or hears ➡ P0907, Niki Pollard and Rosemary Lee, *Beached: A Common-place Book*. A collaboration between a dance choreographer and an observer, using writing and drawing as “reflection of process” during a phase of the rehearsal. The “commonplace book” brings to light the “pre-performance work” later erased by the actual public performance: “images, hunches and memories that she [Rosemary Lee] used to make *Beached*, but which have been swept clean from the work as performed. By reflecting on the making of one work, a second work has emerged that is a subtle shadow of the first” ➡ P1022, Jens Hauser (ed.), *Sk-interfaces. Exploding Borders – Creating Membranes in Art, Technology and Society*. In “Immobile, Bleu... Remix!”, performer Yann Marussich engages in a minute-by-minute diary (scattered in time) of his feelings during his immobile body performance *Bleu*. A writing practice started at rehearsals and carried on over several years (pp.128-133) ➡ P0837, Judie Christie-Richard Gough-Daniel Watt (eds.), *A Performance Cosmology - Testimony for the Future, Evidence of the Past* is well recommended and has this wonderful piece by Rebecca Schneider, “What I Can’t Recall”: “I had decided to write about a performance that I could not recall. And I decided that any performance would do [...] I was interested in the *wavering* of the forms, their aspect of ‘almost gone but not quite’” (p.113). And she proceeds to “not recall” a *Faust* performance of many years earlier.

**Walk 2:** A need to touch.

Item P0287, Kathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s*, is at eye-level. Kathy O'Dell's study of 70's body art is a lot about touching, and a lot about performance photography. What do they have in common? When Live Art is focussed on the painful, insistent marking of the artist's body, how can any document generate a bond even remotely comparable to the artist's own bonding with his/her own flesh? While touching the bookskin of O'Dell's book you think of photography as a tactile bonding. The artists examined here (Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Gina Pane...) have all attempted to imbue the surface of the photographic record with the urgent tactility of their body art. You look across the room to the opposite wall. Next time you pick up a DVD or VHS, what will it be your haptic experience? Are you going to stroke and feel their case, or touch and feel the screen? Will your eyes strive to touch what is shown? While you look back at the photographs in P0287 and strain to build a coherent image of past performances out of pictures that leave a lot to be desired, you imagine your eyes as piercing and pricking the surface of the photographs. You try to develop an image that will be your incision.

**Chain** ➤ P0177, Charlie Spencer and Paul Heritage (eds.), *It's Queer Up North 1992 - 1996: A Catalogue of Queer Performance* speaks of the catalogue as a tangible object of desire: "at least with a catalogue, you can hold it in your hands, put it on a shelf, return to it any old time, and it feels good turning the pages" ➤ P1002, Marina Abramović, *Seven Easy Pieces*. Here Sandra Umatham's essay, "Beyond Documentation, or The Adventure of Shared Time and Place. Experiences of a Viewer" (pp. 47-55) details her own diary (with drawings) of Abramović's performance reenactments and relates the artist's changing views on documentation. Can the "haptics" of a performance extend from photography and travel through other bodies "taking it up", "re-enacting it"? ➤ P0526, Marina Abramović, *Student Body. Workshops 1979-2003. Performances 1993-2003*. In her interview with one of her students, Viola Yesiltac, she explains her view on documentation's multiple facets: as further artwork, as marketable asset, as basis for future reenactments. Her students are also given the chance to document their own work (see Hayley Newman's work on pp. 314-17) ➤ P0844, Sven Lutticken, *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*. Re-enactment as a cultural form of appropriative gesture: since anything is open to re-appropriation, why not performance art? Go to Jennifer Allen's, "Einmal ist keinmal. Observations on Reenactment", p.207: "Reenacting a performance by another artist is not so much a reproduction as a critique of the autonomy of art" ➤ P0769, Anne Bean, *Autobiuary. Shadow Deeds* is a documentation (with enclosed DVD) of a self-reenactment project, *Shadow Deeds*, in which Anne Bean chooses to revisit and perform to camera thirty actions made by herself between 1969 and 1974.

### **Walk 3:** Hunt for P0151.

Easy to miss, this booklet has a tendency to slide to the back of the shelf, hassled by larger and bolder volumes. A document is only definable in relation to a referent. In the absence of a single, definable artwork the document, too, will shift its own meaning and turn into a searching site. The 1998 performances at Milch (London), for instance, documented by Sally Tallant's *ashowabouttime*, developed in a collision of durations with different artists negotiating the space and making it fluid. Sally Tennant remarks in the introduction: "Process is presented as ongoing and unstable". This non-objectual "event" has produced a further trace in the afterlife of the booklet, a document as a trace made possible by previous, non-linear traces. "We do not desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable" (Susan Stewart). P0151 shies away from the more obvious promises of documentation and prefers to move on, to report or displace the original. With "nothing" to show for it, the documentary publication becomes a site for a "multiple exposure": "the manoeuvre from the performance itself to the creation of an object, residue or trace provides conceptual time and space, a fissure, a crack, a place where operational strategies become most apparent" (Lisa Panting). Both as a trace and as a deferred operation, the document site carries forward (reports) the performance through another performance: the performance of documentation. To read something beautiful go now to Lone Twin's report of their own *Ghost Dance* performance as a travel narrative: "They crossed the river and arrived at noon, dressed as cowboys they began to dance". At home you will build your own document site for a performance you have recently seen and enjoyed. A homemade booklet where you doodle maps, diagrams and jottings. You glue cut-outs from programs, highlighting words. You add your own comments, flashes of memory after two days, one week, one

month... You build a collage with any available pictures. Keep it, send it or shred it. My email is: [pustianaz@gmail.com](mailto:pustianaz@gmail.com)

**Chain** ➔ Lois Keidan-Daniel Brine-Adrian Heathfield (eds.), *Live Culture Programme*. Read Heathfield's essay "Going Live", p. 12: "The ephemerality of performance, its tendency towards disappearance, is at the heart of its cultural value, but it is also this quality that sets in motion all the forces that seek to place, name and contain it". Critical and curatorial strategies must be sought for the "staging and re-staging an encounter, with what you missed in performance, with the other of your own thoughts and recollections [...] with the otherness of other people, with the unknown life that happens between you" (13) ➔ P0217, Manick Govinda-David Hughes (eds.), *Research in Process*. In Joshua Sofaer's introduction read about "the too easy common sense assumption [...] that the 'performance' is the live event and that anything subsequent is something 'other'" ➔ P0203, Julian Stallabrass-Pauline Van Mourik Broekman-Niru Ratnam (eds.), *Locus Solus*. In Stallabrass's "Memories of Art Unseen" documentation is discussed as a contradictory "locus", even allowing a "reverse engineering" of the original artwork or of a similar one (p. 26) ➔ P0332, Anna Harding (ed.), *Potential: Ongoing Archive* presents archive-based art projects, among which Ella Gibbs' *Programme*, a 53-day-long programme of "activities" accompanied by an ongoing archive documentation: "the 'activity' of documenting was probably more evident than the documentation itself" (p.54). For an online documentation visit: <http://www.whitechapel.org/programme> ➔ P0417, Andrea Tarsia (ed.), *A Short History of Performance Art part II. The Lecture as a Work of Art* documents the series of performance lectures under the same title at the Whitechapel Gallery, London. Archived materials, memories and conjectures are brought together in a composite post-narrative, always partly fictional. In the case of Atlas Group the documentary process is already part of an "imaginary evidence" which "should not be seen as 'what happened'; instead they offer an image of what can be imagined" (p.9). Forced Entertainment have worked on this idea for D0086, *Imaginary Evidence* Cd-Rom.

#### **Walk 4:** Some weighty evidence.

Item P0179, Samantha Wilkinson (ed.), *Locus + 1993-96* presents written and visual materials about performances and site-specific time-based installations organized by Locus + in different venues in and around Newcastle. As an archival publication it brings to the fore other, often overlooked, producers of Live Art: the curators and the independent cultural promoters. Locus + is an artist-led organization, often marginalized for being "in the provinces". Documentation is often advocated in that it visibly empowers Live Art as an otherwise marginalized and non-conventional art form, but the issues around documentation go beyond the single performative event and the relationship between artist and audience. They also invest questions of cultural privilege and collective authorship. By publishing P0179 Locus + put forward a claim to cultural (collaborative) authorship that lies alongside the singular time and space of each performance event. As Jon Bewley and Simon Herbert point out, this book "has to function as an archive, an arena for limited critical debate with exposition and as an advocate for, or evidence of, motive and method". The artistic choices, collaborative projects and cultural interventions made visible here make up a sort of durational cultural performance countering the institutional dominance of established museums and galleries. You pace round the room thinking of the silently growing library (gift economies and purchase budgets). With the catalogue in your hand you evaluate the weight of the underlying policies as well as the fragile balances that shape the changing possibilities for an independent organization such as this one. The "evidence of motive and method" does not belong to artists alone. A critical documentology may help to bring to the surface the range of mediations that allow the "performance" to appear, and then disappear in the flux. Or just transform itself in other flows and sites.

**Chain** ➔ P0202, Simon Ford, *Wreckers of Civilisation: The Story of Coum Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle*. Documentation as a labour of love by an author who never saw either Coum or Throbbing Gristle live. Ford recounts how Genesis P.Orridge wrote to Ken Friedman asking for the Fluxus archive to be sent over to be destroyed in an attempt to prevent the movement's self-institutionalization. Friedman put on it an impossibly high price of 20,000 dollars ➔ P0629, John Hendricks (ed.), *Fluxus Codex*. Based on the Silverman collection and numbering system, a 616 pp. volume cataloguing all Fluxus "products", an apt summation of Fluxus's tongue-in-cheek use of boxes, reliquaries, cabinets, "flux-packs" for the purpose of collection. Ephemeral yet collectable ➔ P0864, Richard Grayson (ed.), *This Will Not Happen Without You* gives an accounts of the work of the Basement Group, Projects UK and Locus + from 1977 to 2007 and selects documentation from their archives. Go to p.19: "the foundation of an archive is a primary source of recuperation and assimilation for the activities represented in it" (Andrew Wilson) ➔ P1051, Michèle Barrett-

Bobby Baker (eds.), *Bobby Baker. Redeeming Features of Daily Life* is part self-archiving, part critical evaluation of Bobby Baker's work so far, with reprinted interviews, programs, transcripts, supplementary artworks (drawings...). Look for the "remaining evidence" descriptions of each performance ➔ P0646, Gob Squad, *The Making of a Memory*. Dozens of people were asked to provide memories of their own experiences or of their involvement in Gob Squad's past performances on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the company. A catalogue made up of memorial reviews.

### **Walk 5.** Bloodied brandy glasses.

Reach out for item P0182, Adrian Heathfield, *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time* from where you are. A canonical reference in most listings of British Live Art, it develops its own documentation strategies in different directions, some more oblique than others, a kind of hybrid, "linked-yet-independent" artefact. It is also lavishly illustrated. Go to p. 120. Kira O'Reilly is writing about the blood-letting performance she gave for her birthday party with unknown guests. As you would expect there is an emphasis on the organic residue that constitutes the trace of the performance. Here, though, the residue appears more composite: "The work continues to exist in its remains, memories and objects. The bloodied brandy glasses and table cloth. The now fading scars on my body. The birthday cards. The stories individual guests may or may not have told after the event". The afterlife of the performance takes different shapes, material or immaterial. None seems to be privileged, none carries the exclusive name of "document". The only thing that keeps them together appears to be Kira's documentary writing. Sure, there are the images of the bloodied glasses, which would perhaps satisfy your desire for visual evidence. You may share the assumption that Live Art is above all a visual experience, and its documentation should best be visual. But O'Reilly doesn't quite play this game and calls the bluff on her own documentary practice. She explains that, indeed, a photographic set-up had been in place for the recording, but using no flash lights to preserve the intimacy of the encounter meant that the resulting images were no good for printing! As a consequence, the set of images that you see is just a deferred record of the remains, re-photographed three months later - the same delay of her writing, in fact. As a belated record of the residue, the visual documentation shares the same memorial nature as the writing, "retracing myself, with all the inadvertent dislocations, slips and distortions that occur". Many performance documents can appear trustworthy in that they have emerged at the same time and in the same place of the performance (we happily forget the editing and manufacturing process of any such document). If in this case you are not too bothered by their "latecoming", maybe you have come to accept O'Reilly's proposition: the residue is part of a seamless process of becoming, which still is the "performance". You will produce a belated document of a chosen performance by recording an audio description of it. You cheat and use the present tense of live reporting even though you do not remember that much of it. Blindfolded you wander among your memories whispering into a microphone. A live audio reporting, except you are no longer "there".

**Chain** ➔ P0187, Robert Ayers, *Nothing's Finished, Nothing Is. Listening to Alastair MacLennan*, p. 11: "In a situation where there are no edges, actuality is its own document. It's past and present simultaneously. Transitions manifest now, in each moment. Nothing's finished, nothing is" ➔ P0257, Hayley Newman, *Performancemania* uses "fake" photographic documentation in order to disperse performance "as far as it can go" (p.13) ➔ P0387, *Painful but Fabulous: The Lives and Art of Genesis P-Orridge*. See Coum's practice of uncontrolled, surrogate documentation on p. 158. No documentation has been initiated by the performers, it is only at the mercy of the spectators' whims. The images that have been donated to the artist have been slowly assimilated by P-Orridge, excised and re-assembled in their final documentary form ➔ P0200, Hugo Glendinning-Tim Etchells-Forced Entertainment, *Void Spaces*. The collaboration between the photographer Glendinning and Forced Entertainment has explored many routes, from pre-performance photographs ("implying a world, an event or a 'show' which did not yet exist", p.15) to improvised rehearsal shots used as a springboard for further devising work ➔ P0268, Lloyd Gibson-Mark Little, *n*, on how to document a site-specific work that is hidden, and why. "Documentation of performed events is the only trace that can generate the discourse of truth necessary to the maintenance of stability in art production – we must know how, where, when and by whom art was produced. The truth of *n* emerges at one frame every 22 seconds" (p. 22).

### **Walk 6:** A document that no one has read.

Inside P0195, Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art; Performance, Place and Documentation*, there is a section that no one has probably read. Titled “Ten Feet and Three Quarters of an Inch of Theatre” (pp.125-37) it is the documentation of Brith Gof’s *Tri Bywyd*, a site-specific work set in a South Wales forest in 1995. As a site-specific performance (a “place-event”) *Tri Bywyd* suggests a documentation that plays on the problematic referentiality of mapping and cartography. Brith Gof play on these possibilities by pushing the idea of documentation to its extreme. Would a perfect document be one that saves every single element of the performance, only on a different scale? Would it be a score, a blueprint for endless re-enactments? The twelve pages of scored mapping provided here conjure up for the reader a kind of utopian documentation without loss, where everything is preserved in miniature scale. According to the instructions, you will photocopy enlargements of these pages, cut them out and join them to produce a scroll 1ft 3in high and 10ft 3/4in long. (You can’t do this at the Agency because there is no photocopying facility: borrow the book elsewhere). Where are you going to keep a 10ft long scroll, you wonder. Its labyrinthine appearance blends text, images, comment and reproductions of audiowaves. Alternatively, you “prefer to retain the charged erotics of incompleteness by leaving things as they are – forever unfinished” (Clifford McLucas). If it takes documentation to spell out the closure of a performance, does it mean that an *undocumented* performance is not entirely finished? After you have mounted your 10ft documentary scroll of *Tri Bywyd*, you will find out whether or not it’s just a dead scroll you are now lumbered with.

**Chain** ➤ P0195, Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art. Performance, Place and Documentation* has been already visited in this walk but stay on for the concluding chapter on documentation as a site of further displacement ➤ P0489, Michael Kirby, *Happenings. An Illustrated Anthology* painstakingly gathers diagrams, scores, notations of “happenings”, scripts, preparatory materials, and photographic evidence ➤ P0434, Alistair MacLennan, *Knot Naught* on his performance/installations (or “actuators”) where the performance actuates the remaining installation. Go to p.13 to read about the dangers of fetishizing the difference between artwork and documentation: “It is not always possible to draw a hard-and-fast line, since often the two merge imperceptibly into each other along a continuum” (Gray Watson) ➤ P0628 *Joseph Beuys. Actions, Vitrines, Environments* illustrates the strategies of exhibiting performance remains and “props”, e.g. Beuys’s blackboards as residual artworks ➤ P0408, André Stitt, *South of No North. Works 2000-02: the artist as self-archivist through live presentations, exhibitions and installations of relics, “stained, battered souvenirs of encounter, redolent of bodily contact and involvement”* (p. 20).

### **Walk 7: Juggling two books.**

Turning left at the door, you are going to visit one of the inner frontiers of the study room, where new traces are being deposited. Item P01001, Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, reminds us that every document is political: transmission, survival, remembrance are not straightforward actualities. Their inscription in/as culture is fraught with conflicting agendas. Transmission, survival and remembrance are especially vital for the already forgotten. Documents are conflicting not just in their use and interpretation but also in their (history) making. Dashing in the opposite direction for P0118, Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked*, you read there of the becoming through disappearance of performance, seemingly countered by the act of documentation. Phelan values the presentness of the present, rather than the present as an eternal keepsake offered to the altar of history. Trying to juggle the two books you go back and look up Taylor’s definitions of archive and repertoire (pp. 19-20): “‘Archival’ memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change [...] The archive exceeds the live”. The repertoire, on the other hand, “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge”. Do document and performance always split in their temporality, always inhabit opposing places? P1001 suggests that archival memory is only *seen* to be about fixedness and stability, a myth that has to do with the valorization of what is accepted into the archive. The stabilising effect of the archive is therefore partly an illusion and helps to further the notion that culture can best be preserved by appointed custodians since it is that which is “unchanging”. Similarly, the emphasis on the ephemeral act of performance downplays the non-

archival transmission of embodied forms of knowledge. If you think of performance as part of a repertoire that include orality, movement and gesture – that is, if you think in terms of cultural performativity and embodied memory – then the seeming invisibility of their transmission depends on the fact that the archive “exceeds life”, in other words, it misses life, the bodies and body-to-body transmission. Taylor’s words spell out the fact that we are part and parcel of chains of cultural transmission. Our bodies cannot fail to be implicated in them, even though we might think of ourselves as just “observers”. The politics of performance runs through our living bodies. As an exercise in active disappearance you clear out your cellar, attic, garage, storage space. You agonise over each residue before deciding which ones to save or discard. You draw up a list of things worth keeping and of things worth remembering, of things worth losing, and worth forgetting. What does it mean to “disappear” your own things? Can you really perform this trick? What does it mean to have already “lost” them?

[Ref.

**Chain** ➔ P0189, Chris Cheek-Kirsten Lavers, *Things Not Worth Keeping. Millennium Collection*. A project similar to the abovementioned task: 1000 people were asked on Christmas 1999 to nominate one thing they would have liked to discard and why. Browse here for photographs, reasons why and short narratives ➔ P0900, Stuart Brisley, *Beyond Reason: Ordure* is a narrative around collecting decaying traces: dirt, shit, waste. Collecting, archiving and curating for the “Collection of Ordure” tells the reverse tale of our obsession with keeping and turns the notion of archive on its head ➔ P0774, Melanie Keen-Eileen Daly (eds.), *Necessary Journey* looks at archive-based art projects. Read about Keith Piper’s “ghosting” of the archive and his “tactical remembrance” to reactivate it through renewed processes of decoding and sense-making dealing with the images deposited there (p.70) ➔ P0498, Guy Brett, *Carnival of Perception. Selected Writings on Art* is a competent and passionate testimony to artists exploring “ephemeral and valueless materials” as a “means of insight”. See Brett’s essay on Rose Finn-Kelcey, “Vacating the Premises: Rose Finn-Kelcey” (206-19), where he discusses her notion of “vacated performance”, the use of surrogate performers and the observer’s verbal record as a form of documentation ➔ P0351, Henry M Sayre, *The Object of Performance. The American Avant-Garde Since 1970*. Go to Introduction, p. 2: “What saved the museum, what in effect gave it access to objectless art, was the document, the record of the art event that survived the event”.

**Walk 8:** Hidden in the library lurks a booklet.

It is item P0539 Alice Maude-Roxby - Françoise Masson, *On record. Advertising, Architecture and the Actions of Gina Pane*. Despite the unalluring images this is an insightful, extended interview with Françoise Masson, the photographer who collaborated with Gina Pane in the realization of her *constats*, the photographic evidence of her performances, both public and private. Go to p.9: “Photographers are expected to be invisible”. Alice Maude-Roxby does a brilliant job at “extracting the work of the photographer from that of the artist portrayed”. By doing so she highlights one of the problems with documentation: its smooth replacement of the performance that is ostensibly represented by it. Usually, the sceptical argument around documentation hinges on its “lack of presence”, on its limited value as a pale reflection of the original, full-bodied, artwork. Maude-Roxby’s conversation with Masson subverts this argument by implying that this scepticism only works to erase the labour of documentation and the subjectivity of the documenter. Far from re-establishing a single presence (the artist’s), she suggests at least a dual one, collaborative *and* conflictual. Her argument can be used to peel off further layers from the frame of the document’s visibility. What most documentation asks you to dismiss is not just the gaze of the documenter, but also your collaborative presence as audience, spectator, participant or other. Looking at the document for the original may be a misguided effort on more than one count. While you strive to get a closer look at the performing artist, you are negotiating your desire against the visual field made available by the documenter’s (often in turn negotiated) gaze. Paradoxically, the documenter is made all the more powerful by his/her ascribed invisibility, not just on account of the artist’s wish to appear but also because of the selective blindness of the viewer. Through this invisibility the documenter gets “taken up” no less than as the apparatus of vision itself. You also pick up on the way P1127. In her curated exhibition *Live Art on Camera* Maude-Roxby has looked at performance photographs by Babette Mangolte, Peter Moore and others as documents on their own right, i.e. within another history, the history of photography. You practice double vision by looking

differently at performance photographs. You nearly forget their iconic nature. You sense double performances in the study room, while you perform your own acts of looking, of second looking.

**Chain** ➤ P0420, Adrian George (ed.), *Art, Lies and Videotape. Exposing Performance* includes an essay by Tracey Warr, “Image as Icon: Recognising the Enigma”, on four divergent vectors of photographic documentation ➤ P0427 Manuel Vason - Lois Keidan - Ron Athey (eds.), *Exposures*. Vason’s photographic sessions are collaborative “performances” for the camera as artists and photographer look for a “pose” that will get at the visual core of their artwork ➤ P0545, Gloria Moure (ed.), *Ana Mendieta*. Her photographs after the event are “fugitive in themselves, and presented to an audience that had no chance to witness the event” (p. 162). Mendieta documents the absencing traces of her own disappearance ➤ P0216, Heather Ackroyd-Dan Harvey, *Afterlife*, on grass-photography as ephemeral practice. Their “deviant” photography uses Nature as performer. Instead of allying themselves to deadened stillness, their photographs open themselves up to the vital processes of transformation and fading, thus highlighting ephemerality as intensity ➤ P0124, Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* quotes Walter Benjamin’s concept of the “dialectical image” on pp. 52-53: “Dialectical images are images that show the show [...] provoke a viewer/reader to think again – to take a second look. It is somehow in the flickering undecidability between the viewing subject’s reading and the object’s cracks that dialectical images threaten to work”. A useful definition for a performance document setting out to engage our “second looks”.

### **Walk 9:** Disrupting documentation.

You’ll probably want to tackle the video section by now and watch Live Art as though it were a film. It is a pleasing satisfactory idea to think that a time-based artwork can actually time-travel and repeat itself for you as a viewing experience experienced in time. It feels safer, too, watching radical performance art while sitting on a comfortable sofa, a tranquil domestic insulation against the unsettling sensorium instigated by some Live Art events. Must watching video documentation always be a hopelessly easier option? Easy options were certainly not an idea embraced by Ernst Schmidt jr and Kurt Kren. Go to item P0550, Stephen Barber, *The Art of Destruction*, for a journey on the path of visual destruction followed by the Viennese Actionists and their film documenters. 8mm and 16mm film, rather than digital video, allowed for physical manipulation, for cuts and incisions. This book has been chosen for your final walk for two reasons: the films it examines violently reject the banality of vision – the smoothing-over of its minor and major traumas – whilst also resisting the notion that the document is subservient to the event. The disruptive vision pursued by Kren’s and Schmidt’s films is in a way anti-documentary. Actionist performances turned Live Art into the staging of an event that came closest to releasing the death drive through the subject’s orgiastic annihilation. Their “art of destruction” furthered its blind fury through documentary films driven by the same impulse of the originating actions. Go to p.6: “the image does not document the action: it dissects it, seizes material from it, and launches itself from the action in order to create an autonomous film work that holds and even aggravates the provocation or obscenity of that action”. Through dissection and aggravation the deadly nature of the document may be turned against itself. In order to escape its pale fruition the document may explore at least two routes. Both are performative. One, shown radically here, leads through the document’s resistance to offering a mildly accessible form of vision. As Kren and Schmidt show, it may also lead to a kind of “autonomous” artwork, or in any case to the visibility of the documenter. Another route leads to the enhancement of the Live Art spectator as a performative collaborator, a disseminator of images, a subjective reenactor of his/her own memories.

**Chain** ➤ P0871, Matthew Reason, *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* deals comprehensively with the different media of documentation as applied to theatre, dance, Live Art and performance: “documentation is both the product of disappearance and in turn also productive of disappearance” (p. 27). Go to p. 87 for the “timeshifting” opened up by the experience of watching video: “With video the relationship between performance and audience reaches its most exploded and dislocated position, with temporal and spatial simultaneity shattered and with potentially no continuity or cohesion within the audience experience either in single experiences or subsequent experiences” ➤ P0898, Edward Scheer-Peter Eckersall (eds.), *The Ends of the ‘60s. Selected Essays from “Performance Paradigm”* includes Edward Scheer’s “Documents of Paradox: Negotiating Liveness in Video Art” (pp. 128-35) on the “endless interconnection of event and document”, on re-mediation, and on liveness as effect of an “interaction with a spectator” having to do with “instantaneous sense perceptions” (p.129) ➤ P0482, Monica Ross,

*justfornow*. Go to p.7: “in digital time event does not pass, we do. In our encounter with the ever now of the digital event, it is ourselves, our processes of remembering and forgetting which become subject to change”. The internet is a distribution mechanism in [www.justfornow.net](http://www.justfornow.net): the doubling of event and residue “tells us that we have missed our encounter, that it can only be seen now as memory, preserved as something rather fleeting, where the eventness has become distilled into *something else*, distributed by fluctuating means” ☺ P0497, Anthony Dean (ed.), *Performance/Technologies. A User’s Guide*. See here Alex Hoare’s essay, “Presence and Absence” (22-25) on the “presenting” and “absenting” made possible by the technological manipulations of time and space ☺ P0371, Elin Diamond (ed.), *Performance and Cultural Politics* includes Peter Auslander’s contentious response to Peggy Phelan, “Liveness. Performance and the Anxiety of Simulation” (196-213). It argues for liveness and mediatization existing in “a mutual dependence”. The new paradigm of simulation implodes the binary opposition between the two and breeds anxiety about the death of the “real” and the “live”.

Documentology emerges at those edges where the binary separation of event and document is seen to crumble and fall back on itself, enmeshing every repetition in performance. It is the difference in/of the document that belies its performativity, at times hidden, at times openly brash, some other times fake and theatrical. Now you walk on. You pick and link. You add your chains. You unravel the archive as it grows, here and elsewhere. You become a participant in its operations. You do not just sit and watch. You start from this study room.

\* Guide completed on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008. At this point in time the archived publications were standing at number 1052.

\*\* A note of warning: the (book) chains should not be taken as an attempt at a comprehensive bibliography, they are here to be rearranged and supplemented by using all the cross-references you are going to pick up on your way.



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<sup>1</sup> Alice Bellagamba - Paola Di Cori - Marco Pustianaz (eds.), *Generi di traverso. Culture, storie, narrazioni attraverso le discipline*, Edizioni Mercurio, Vercelli 2000

<sup>2</sup> Marco Pustianaz - Luisa Villa (eds.), *Maschilità decadenti. La lunga fin de siècle*, Sestante, Bergamo 2004