Meeting the Archive Through
An Interdisciplinary Artistic Practice

By

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Abstract

This practice research thesis investigates creative approaches to 'the archive', through the making and analysis of contemporary art works that are located across and between screen-based, live, and installation art forms. The methodology focuses on encountering and responding to moving image collections, in particular films where the body is instructive, active and moving. Artistic strategies include the creative re-appropriation and enactment of archival material that interrogates the relationships between artefact, body and digital space through the use of archival scenarios. This aligns with Uriel Orlow's concept of the 'archive thinker', where artists test the nature of archives beyond a singular collection and include the socialising potential of their content.

This thesis, which includes a number of video and installation artworks, responds to the increasing availability of digitized and online historic film and video material. It also deliberates on the destabilising effect when an archivist, librarian or specialist is not available to help to discover and contextualise historic online content. It considers the shifting mode of analogue to digital access and takes a playful approach to these concerns through archive thinking. In this, the performing body acts as an agent and interlocutor to translate and enliven the digital archive and to free historical records from an object based taxonomy. As such, this enquiry aims to produce artwork that explores how to counter or extend archival content, testing the relevance of, or necessity of having access to, the provenance of originating material.

List of Contents

Figure List

Introduction

> Like all men of the Library, I have travelled in my youth; I have wandered in search of a book, perhaps the catalogue of catalogues; now that my eyes can hardly decipher what I write, I am preparing to die just a few leagues from the hexagon in which I was born. Once I am dead, there will be no lack of pious hands to throw me over the railing; my grave will be the fathomless air; my body will sink endlessly and decay and dissolve in the wind generated by the fall, which is infinite. (Borges, 2000. p. 66)

As an artist researcher in this practice as research PhD project I investigate and explore contemporary implications of the archive. I do this by responding to originating film sources utilising performative and moving image practices. The research is realised through the making and analysis of art works that are located across and between screen-based, live and installation art forms. I am utilising performance methodologies and practices to discover new ways to understand how an archive is accessed and understood. I am fascinated by how an archive configures our behaviours and elicits an embodied response, where memory, gender, desire and play become part of how it can be newly read and understood.

Archive

Concentrating on archives that hold North American films, the two main archives I am working with and drawing moving image content from is the Motion Picture Collections at the Library of Congress, Washington DC, and the Prelinger Archive, accessed through Archive.org. The various analogue, open source, online and digital films are from circa 1945 to 1990.

The thesis explores how I manifest my archival artmaking and the complications and commentary of this. I will make work that explores the archived body made active. I

want to understand my engagement with the bodies I seek in film, and if this informs my use of other bodies, other performers, in my response. Or does it have to be me within the work? In seeking out the archived bodies that have done the things I have done: learning bowling, baseball and swimming, what more can be learnt of these activities through performative strategies?

The term archive is typically used to describes a body of knowledge, usually object/document-based and held together by institutional procedure; an order brought to the historic through the bureaucratic. Ernst van Alphen states in *Archival Obsessions and Obsessive Archives* that 'The acts of collecting and archiving introduce meaning, order, boundaries, coherence, and reason into what is disparate and confused, contingent and without contours' (2008, p.66). Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* explains how this bureaucratic process perpetuates meaning beyond the individual artefacts (2002, p. 145):

> 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 accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in a broken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accident; 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 afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale.

Foucault's notion of a structure that creates the archive, changing a collection from being an 'amorphous mass' to accessible statements, fascinates me. How this network, the content of an archive, sustains itself through its archival relationships is conversely also part of its potential failing. In this network, gaps and omissions are made apparent, what is not "said" is as blatant as what is. An archive seen in the light of this can be

described as highly politicised, as it seems to write histories through its compilation, and through its omissions erase or ignore others.

An important factor in this research is the relationship of place and person, archive and archivist. It is where I start to see how the body affects or is affected by the archive. A key text that threads throughout this research, Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever*, explains that *archē* is the ancient Greek term for beginning or commencement, from which meaning or knowledge springs (1998, p.02). *Archeion* therefore is a place or building where the records are kept, and where the *archons* who command it inhabit. Archives and where their records are securely and carefully kept, tended by the archivist, maintaining its stability, and as Derrida points out, their authority. The two aspects, place and person, are integral to my thinking. They seem inseparable in understanding how an archive operates, with the keeping and maintaining fundamental to how an archive continues to function and be relevant. Conversely, I understand that the practical yet contemplative relationship between the keeper and the kept, archivist and archive, in making an archive an archive, is complicated by the notion of subjectivity. The archivist, as does the cataloguer and librarian, possess a knowing body, and their hand in forming an archive should be recognised. I will explore anecdote, feeling and desire to find out how it affects my understandings and negotiations in my dealings with an archive, the archivist and cataloguer alike.

Hal Foster describes an 'archival impulse' in his same titled text from 2004, where artists are driven to interpret, reveal and re-make the archive though a creative response. The energy of the liberated artefact where artists 'turn belatedness into becomingness' (Foster, 2004, p. 22), is rich with new archival relations. I find this compelling: to want

to find and rescue what is both lost and useful in the archive. It is only possible to move across and through an archive, one cannot engage in all its contents simultaneously. From my perspective as an artist this fragmentation, dealing with one element or artefact at a time, also echoes a sense of loss, a harking back. The artefact is always part of a larger system, and regardless of the excitement generated in finding and studying it, it belongs to the archive.

Archive Thinker

In a one-day workshop presented during *Art of the Archive* in 2015[1], Rick Prelinger, of Prelinger Archives, states 'while the archive is overtheorized, 'archives' are undertheorized' (Delfanti, A., Fish, A. and Lippman, A., 2018). Taking Prelinger's assertion in relation to Foster's impulsive archive, I am tempering both through the concept of the 'archive thinker', coined by artist Uriel Orlow in *Latent Archive. Roving Lens* (2006, pp. 34-35). Orlow describes three different types of artists working with archives:

1) Artists who generate fictional archives as 'archive makers'.

2) Others that deal with the real archive, real actual unadulterated content, using documentary or found footage, these are 'archive users'.

3) 'archive thinkers' sit between these two activities, where they see the archive for what it represents; its assumed authority, its perceived latent potential where "the exploration of the archive, at the intersection of concept and matter, has a profound urgency" (Orlow, 2006, p.34).

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[1] University of California, Davis Campus

Orlow aligns himself with archive thinker, a methodology that I will adopt, where similar to Orlow I will 'consider artistic archive-thinking of this materiality from the vantage point of moving image works and their specific interweaving of the roles of the artist as researcher, the camera as eye witness, and the film/video work as keeper of archival matter' (Orlow, 2006, p.35). I understand my archival thinking as manifesting a research practice through the engagement with the film archives and artefacts. The research questions I have around my archival practice proposition the creative process, using moving image to not only work with but record onto, in capturing the outcomes of the practice research. Simply put: I work with films in order to perform with them, to make new or extended responses to an archive, framed through a reflexive archive thinking.

Digital Anxiety

Archives' increasingly digitised status and online dispersal would seem to challenge the nature of a traditional physical space and place were records are kept, what Derrida describes as its historic and governmental dominance (1998, p.2). In this thesis I want to make sense of this difference, a sense made through my archive thinking. I see an urgency in how I understand the space and place of an archive when it's an institution, in a room with an archivist present, and when its online, where results from searches are offered in a list through a search engine. I see a need to consider how meeting physical collections elicits a response that is distinctively different from experiencing its online equivalent.

I will take into account Giovanna Fossati's 'human mediation' in his text *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (2009), when thinking through how an archival film journeys to become a digitised video (2009, p.120):

> The human mediation in taking a photograph, making a film, writing an algorithm, becomes of crucial importance in archival practice. It can mark the link between the film born artefacts and its digital copy. Moreover, human mediation can be the carrier of authenticity from an original film artefact to its restoration.

As Fossati states, the notion of authenticity is a verifying process, attributed through interaction and 'mediation', and not an automatic given, but an active approach. I understand this authenticity to be predicated on an agreed validating archival framework, made up of protocols and processes. I am attempting to comprehend the propositions of digitised archives through an arts practice that understands these differences, the modes of creative operation, where my practice is produced at the nexus of contemplating the transformation of archival film from object to file. From the algorithm to the library shelf, from being bodily present or digitally at hand, how I experience an archive is how I understand and make meanings from it. I am considering how Fossati's 'carrier of authenticity' (2009, p.120) operates and impacts my experience of the films.

The Instructed Performing Body

The common factor in my archival thinking and making is understanding how as an artist I negotiate these propositions through the body. It's what I am looking for in an archive, what I use to understand what I am encountering, and it is what I use in making my response. By performative, I mean as Richard Schechner describes it, 'as if', where the performative 'consists of constructed social realities – gender, race, what have-you, all of which are provisional, 'made-up'' (2013, p. 169). This rests comfortably with being the archive thinker, a performative role of being present and attentive in the archive or when dealing with it to realise artworks. Being attendant in the physical archive is a

performative process moderated by complex and negotiated rituals and beliefs: how to behave, pencils only, how requesting an item works, the waiting for the requested item and so on.

Online Archive

Are these rituals and beliefs still being transmitted when an archive is online? The sharing and using of online archival material is problematised by the ease with which the material can be accessed and shared, possibly without due care or understanding of the materials' provenance. There is no archivist telling you what to do or how to behave, or 'perform' in a particular way. There is no interpersonal negotiating or obeying of rules. Brad Troemel in his essay *Art After Social Media* (2014, p. 39) explains the problematic nature of the internet as a place to hold content, where it increasingly lacks a provenance, and where photography, film, artworks etc. are progressively shared and distributed via social network platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. He describes how contextual information is lost as it travels from link to link and back again, 'like a wheel's tire, the image gets stripped of its own form through its continued use' (Troemel, 2014, p. 39). In creating an artwork generated from online archives, do I need to maintain a digital archival authenticity? Do I have to perform the archivist/librarian in mediating my finds?

The increasing availability of online content could be described as liberating, and indeed this has given rise to ideas around creative commons copyright usage and critical examination of appropriation in creative practices. In developing a method to analyse this, I will bring my subjective understandings to bear on my archive thinking, in understanding the different experiences of meeting physical and digital archives. I see a

marked difference in how an archive is mediated on and offline, and how that mediated knowledge, the rules and processes, submerge online. My subjective archive thinking can be used to map this and come to an understanding of how this affects my creative practice.

Thesis Structure

Chapter one unpacks my moving image and performance work *The ties that bind me to my brothers are not fastened to my wrists but rather wrapped around my heart* (2012). Made previous to the start of this PhD project, I begin to develop a creative strategy through attempting to unpack the performed and filmed responses to extant originating film. These can be described as performative re-enactments strategies, around performed appropriation. I examine the consequences of generating a live work and moving image and how these may work together in order to include the associated literature from Diana Taylor, Philip Auslander and Elin Diamond. This is framed by Michel Foucault's and Jacque Derrida's meditations on archives.

Chapter Two describes and maps the creation of the first artwork to be realised in the thesis, *Let's Go Bowling* (2016*)*, a performance to camera work of 8 minutes duration. The work is developed from a same titled film *Let's Go Bowling* from 1955 from the Prelinger Archive, found online. It was found through search enquiries with the terms sport, learning and instruction. Uriel Orlow's concept of the archive thinker is played out in relation to the work, as is Hito Steyerl's approach to post-production practices.

Chapter Three examines the outcome of *Let's Go Bowling* (2016), and how the two performers realised their performative learning in attempting to enact the originating

footage instructing them to bowl. There is also a scrutiny of the inbuilt failure present in the work, where the performers were never going to learn how to bowl. The film is put into context in relation to Jeremy Millar's *Human Form in Art* (2008) and Yvonne Rainer's 1968 *Trio*, where in both the camera is fixed, capturing what is placed in front of it.

Chapter Four reflects upon a four-month research placement in the Library of Congress, (LoC) Washington DC, USA, within the Moving Picture Reading room. I describe how I locate myself within and through the film collections and inhabit the archive as a performative and active 'archive thinker' while dealing with analogue materials from the Macdonald Collection. *Similar Items (based on meta-data)* (2016) is made at this time and starts to explore possible alternative archives created by me.

Chapter Five focuses upon how my art practice is affected by the algorithmic turn, where I examine how the materials I find via search engine returns also become a way of looking within and operating through a remote digital archive. I develop and realise *Que(e)ry the Archive,* which uses all the found archival footage to date in a live performance, where my body conflates the relationship between performing in and with an archive, presented as part of a public event in September 2017. The final aspect of the thesis is presented in an exhibition of the all the video works to date, including two finals works *Read Through* (2018) and *Remote Viewing* (2018), where I perform to and amongst the archival narratives to camera as a conclusion to the practical work of the thesis.

Methodology

As an artist researcher, I am a reflexive practitioner who immerses myself in the production of artwork, while also analysing it through critical contextualisation and, where appropriate, participant and peer feedback. This approach is based upon my tacit knowledge of art production, the experiences that instinctively and intuitively direct the development of the work. The work in progress is documented via note taking, film and photographic evidence. This supports a dialogue with the work to enable a broader conversation around the practice research.

The research is twofold; I will analyse how I function in the archive and make sense of this through an arts practice, while responding to specific films. Appropriating and re-enacting the selected material, I am interrogating the relationships between artefact, body and digital space through the use of archival scenarios. This research project creatively explores how bodily responses, as found in moving image, can become communicable through re-enactment as performed and filmed responses in the making of new artworks. Through this process, I recognise that the questions I am bringing to the didactic films and their ability to instruct also return to the same questions in how I operate and am instructed when working within an archive. This is all the more pertinent as conventional archives increasingly give way to a digital equivalence, and the questions I have around meeting an archive are brought into stark relief.

The productive processes and results are triangulated with theoretical perspectives and other artist works offering insight into the resultant work through examining and contextualising the practical findings. The practice element of the research has developed through an informed use of performance, moving image and fine art

making strategies, to realise and test the development of the research questions. I am also alert to how the new moving image works produced can operate in and of themselves in holding the what Robin Nelson calls 'processual knowledge' (2006, p.112). He reasons (2006, p. 115):

> The research in its totality yields new understandings through the interplay of perspectives drawn from evidence produced in each element proposed, where one data-set might be insufficient to make the insight manifest. In sum, praxis (theory imbricated within practice) may thus better be articulated in both the product and related documentation, as indicated.

I intend for the work I produce throughout this thesis to operate in this way. What I produce will be the contextualisation of itself and the writing, and vice versa. This will be developed where the resulting summation of the creative work will yield the final outcomes of the research. Each film will map the development of my research questions and findings. The final resulting films, contingent on being part of the whole presentation, come about and function through the complete thesis and are a key conclusion of the research.

I examine discourses found in the practice of artists including Uriel Orlow, Gerald Byrne, Omar Fast and Yvonne Rainer, with theory discussed by Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Hal Foster. This is informed by Amelia Jones, Rebecca Schneider and importantly Diane Taylor, through which I began to understand the significance of an embodied response, and the centrality of it to this thesis in the on-going discovery within the work.

The two main areas of ethical consideration are in the use of performers in the work, and the use of potential or actual copyright protected material. I have ensured that all

video and intellectual usages are cleared with any performers I use, including acknowledging their contribution to the research project, and I have ensured that all film rights or clearance issues are considered before any footage is used.

The majority of the material content of this research project is focused on 'useful films' (Acland & Wasson, 2001, p. 4), with a demonstration of leisure and sporting activities, originally shown in the social space of the cinema, school or local club. I am intrigued by how the body is represented as active on a screen, perpetuating action and vigour and the socialising proposition, being healthy and wholesome, lively and vigorous. The question arises: how do these archives function in relation to my body as I meet the bodies in the archives through my body? This thesis questions what there is still to learn: How might performative enactments of archival sources counter or extend the experiences available through digitised online archives and animate rediscovered histories? Am I able to make use of enactment strategies to release this labour from the originating films? How does my creative response to an archive counter or critique it?

Chapter 1: From Re-enactment

In this chapter I reflect on an artwork, *The ties that bind me to my brothers are not fastened to my wrists but rather wrapped around my heart* (2012) (see Appendix A)*,* made before starting my doctoral studies in order to map concerns that form the basis of this research project. It was a commissioned art work presented in the public galleries at Exeter Phoenix, Devon. The title is taken from a US male fraternity pledge, origin unknown. The work consists of moving image and performance, presented as an installation in a gallery setting. I explore this individual piece of work through performance practice theories, particularly concentrating on re-enactment strategies as discussed by Amelia Jones, Rebecca Schneider and Diana Taylor. Their approaches to embodied histories in relation to archives offers me a critical perspective to newly understand working archival media, in a moving image arts practice.

Undertaking the work outlined above enables me to develop my understanding of how the body translates performed and performative histories, in particular focusing on re-enactment as a route to do this. This is to place *The ties that bind…* in a performative context that will inform the development of this thesis and subsequent practice components. I am doing this at the start of the thesis in order to understand my tacit approach to making work involving the body and existing originating film material, and my subjective approach to this. I am using re-enactment as a method to replay the chosen film clips to understand more than I am able by watching them alone. This is to extrapolate an informed practice methodology that positions the development of the work in light of recognising how the body cannot only receive knowledge but also transmits it through a creative performative practice.

It is not without a sense of irony that I start this project looking at how I have worked with archives as an artist, returning to my own artist "archive" to do this. Penelope Curtis, latterly the Director of Tate Britain from 2010 to 2015, in discussing artists who maintain their own archive, states 'It is a truism that most artists have essentially one idea; and the [artist] archive replays its variations and its continual refinding [sic]' (2013, p. 8). While I do not admit to the career defining activity of ordering past works into an archive for posterity, I would subscribe to this thinking. Artwork is not created in isolation, and past works are constantly accumulating, reforming into new works. In this chapter, the 'replaying variations' of previous work aims to draw out practical and theoretical concerns that inform and anchor this research project within the lineage of my practice. These include my creative preoccupation with instructive delivery and its affect as a socialising activity. In unpacking *The ties that bind...* I begin by exploring how performative re-enactments strategies enabled me to creatively respond to an originating film. I will examine issues around appropriation and the consequences of generating new meanings through the re-enactment of extant material.

Re-enacting: *The ties that bind…*

Figure 1. The ties that bind... (2012), performance, Exeter Phoenix.

*The ties that bind…*was developed from a short non-explicit scene from a 1980's US pornographic film, *In Hot Pursuit* (dir. Travis, 1985). The video clip was unearthed via an online sharing site when researching for a previous project. The clip fascinated me as being very much of its time and place: California in the 1980s, illicit in its intent, yet predicated on male friendship. The resultant artwork had a number of elements: a daily performance, a video of the performance made for camera filmed by Benjamin Borley and an installation housing both the video and set for the performance (shown in Figure 1 above). The was based upon the original verbatim script and film set from the originating video clip. The film set was created to approximate the staging from the original, with careful placement to echo it as much as feasible, as shown in Figure 2 below. My intention at the time, through creating a re-enactment of the originating video, was to find a way to explore the charged interplay and banter between the two

male characters (played by Jonny Rowden and Simon Bradshaw) that could reveal a new understanding of the originating video through its remaking.

Figure 2. *The ties that bind…* (2012), set detail during filming.

In Hot Pursuit

There were a number of elements I wanted to explore in the originating video clip of *In Hot Pursuit* that drew me to develop a methodology as a practitioner that utilised performance, video and installation. I was intrigued by *In Hot Pursuit's* modelling of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick calls 'homosocial behaviour' (1985, p.696), same sex relationships that are predicated on social bonds and friendship while also suffused with homosexual tension, but not consumption. The scene from the originating film, and my remake, was constructed around the interplay between two male friends, one in need of shelter after being caught in a rainstorm and the other offering aid and warmth. The interaction of the characters in the originating film – how they verbally and physically negotiated with each other, moved and projected meaning – led me to consider the scene as a series of instructions for how men behave with each other in an intimate and

charged way. I wanted to bring these interactions and ironic contradictions to light: a type of heteronormative behaviour[2] that was predicated on the eventual homosexual liaison between the two characters. I was compelled by the two protagonists behaviour echoing mainstream films of its time, such as *Back to the* Future (1985), *Teen Wolf* (1985) or *The Breakfast Club* (1985), through the banter and body language. Yet *In Hot Pursuit* had an entirely different outcome and audience. Having moved from the US in 1979, I was drawn to this exploration to make greater sense of a longing I felt as a teenager, looking for a reflection of myself that was not available to me at the time. By making *The ties that bind…* I hoped to gain insight into aspects of the representation of US gay male interactions from a particular period through the re-enactment of existing material, to draw attention to it but also to explore copying or remaking as method to do this in and of itself.

There were a number of components at play in my decision to extract and reconstruct this particular scene. I identified with the subjects of the film, as there was common ground in my own sexual orientation. I wanted to creatively investigate through developing *The ties that bind…* a possible meaningful utility where I might learn something new about the characters in the originating film. Through Jonny and Simon's re-enactments I hoped to reveal subjective histories I could then newly understand. Through such a remake, I wanted to demonstrate how meaning is not given or static, but newly constructed through reading, or through a re-reading via making. In particular I used the dialogue, gestures and presence of the characters in the originating film to frame questions I have about how I am able to re-construct and copy, exploring

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[2] The characters talked about working out, teasing each other on their physiques and appearance, and how they could make themselves attractive and available to the opposite sex.

subjective preoccupations, and how this can be an artwork. Although not explicit when planning the project, on reflection I was also attempting to unpack Sedgewick's homosocial/homosexual relations from the originating film through my remake. The humour redolent in the remake of a non-explicit pornographic scene, where the performers finished the scene semi-naked but physically unrequited, was something I hoped would emerge naturally.

I did not set out to create an exact replica or homage to the film, but to draw out and test what could be described as the essential elements of the originating film that I was able to re-use, and to experiment with these approximations. At the start of the project I didn't know what these essential elements might be. I see my process of creating my re-enacted response, as part of discovering what the constituents might be. This approach might seem precarious, as the outcomes are not certain. I did not want to create a comparative relationship between the original and my version, so not making work that highlights this difference. Artist Gerald Byrne describes his own re-enacted works as being 'deconstructive in the sense that the works reproduce or re-enact these historical referents [sic] that make them palpably vulnerable' (2013, p.23). Byrne's films are imperfect copies, flawed in their copying. In *The ties that bind…* there are inconsistencies between the acting, costumes and narrative of the film; dissonance generates new ways to read the work, leading to new interpretations of the originating material. The association between *In Hot Pursuit* and my remake is an attempt to understand what might take place in copying, and how this mutates and changes meanings into what is an imperfect remake. I was eager to unpack what I saw as a very loaded and possibly instructive take on male homosexual/homosocial relations. Like Byrne, I did not want to make a direct copy; I wanted to construct a relationship with

the originating video through a form of deconstruction and reconstitution, driven in part by my own creative sensibilities.

In developing a method to make the work 'palpably vulnerable' (Byrne, 2013, p.23), I was happy for the performers to use their British accents to deliver what was clearly American from the originating video. They talked about being at the gym, working out and being muscular, when their bodies did not necessarily reflect this. The set inside the gallery where the performance took place was not a realistic location. The videoed version of the performance was done on a darkened theatre stage. In making *The ties that bind*… I wanted to emphasise the differences and create imperfections. These new 'referents', as Byrne describes, focuses on the performances that are 'not solid or stable – they become bodies' (2013, p. 13). As performers their bodies are a lever to newly understand the narratives in the originating film through their performances.

Taking the process of creative reconstruction further, artist Steven Rushton states that re-enactment 'is the mediation of memory; how memory is an entity which is continuously being restructured – not only by filmmakers and re-enactors but also by us personally, as mediating and mediated subjects' (2005, p. 11). He sees the shifts and differences that take place in re-enactment as 'approaches to the manipulation and restructuring of memory' (2005, p. 11). In using re-enactment as a strategy, I am attempting in *The ties that bind*… to create a relationship that goes beyond simply looking at the originating scene. In re-working the components of the original enactment, they become redolent with personal meanings created from the experience of the social process and collaboration between the performers, and partly that of the technicians, gallery and audience. I worked with the originating film segment in order to

gain a fuller understanding of the interplay of the two men in the originating video, through the responses of the performers and by personally directing the remake. I wanted to re-construct my understanding of the originating clip, my memory and understandings, and that through this process I would find new ways to move from simply seeing and looking at the film to watching.

Gallery/Stage

On entering the Exeter Phoenix Gallery where *The ties that bind…* was installed, the audience was met with an installation art work and single channel video projection of the re-enacted work, where, once a day throughout the exhibition, a two and a half minute live performance took place with the performers Bradshaw and Rowden. The installation was therefore twofold: it was an installation that housed the videoed performance, and once a day became a performance space. The same sofa, coffee table, lamp, rug and fireplace that were used in the video, were also part of the installation. This became the stage for the performance as shown in Figure 3 below. During the performance the video projection was turned off, and when it was over the projection was turned back on. The various elements were also meant to evidence the making of *The ties that bind...*. This meant that the audience, whenever they arrived, would either see the performers in the video re-enacting the originating film, or the performers themselves in the set it all took place within.

Figure 3 *The ties that bind…* (2012), installation, Exeter Phoenix.

I did not plan a particular hierarchy to any of the three aspects of the project: the installation, video or performance. Verbal feedback on the first performance from the audience and the performers themselves was that the live performance was the most dynamic and exciting part of the work. I would agree, yet I was still attached to presenting the varying parts, making clear how each could be observed as coming out of and relying upon each other: film, installation and performance. Philip Auslander, in his discussion on performance and moving image (2008), offers some rationalisation of why I did not feel the need to wholly privilege the live performance of *The ties that bind…*. In *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (2008), he describes how the presence of projected film does not necessarily usurp the body and that we are in a context where the live body is not the dominant media of presentation (2008, p.43). Viewing moving image on TV, projected film and screen has become ubiquitous. He states that 'we now experience such work in terms of fusion, not con-fusion, a fusion

that we see as taking place within an essentially televisual digital environment that incorporates both live and recorded elements indiscriminately as raw materials' (2008, p. 42). Aside from the practical aspect of always having performances present as described above, either a projected video or live, Auslander's argument gives me leave to consider the 'to camera' performance at least in the same authentic light as the live ones. This is not to say that having the live performances was overtly 'equal', as these were clearly dynamic, energised and always different; but the three components of the work set up a series of relations between artefact, text and body, that could be clearly taken forward and explored further.

Jane Blocker, in her text *Repetition: A Skin Which Unravels* (2012), discusses repetition or remakes of certain artworks that, through referencing their previous versions, can also take the form of and become potential archives (2012, p. 199). She examines works such as Steve McQueen's artist film *Deadpan* (1997), where he mimics and references Buster Keaton's stunt of a house wall falling on him, saved from harm by the window opening. She sees this as a form of archive, drawing upon Derrida in part for her understanding, as a place 'where order is given' (Blocker, 2012, p. 207), tempered by Carolyn Steedman's observations of the archive also being a place where things end up, not at the beginning, but as 'stories caught half way through' (Blocker, 2012, p.207). McQueen's film, she reasons, becomes an archive though the process of remaking and re-enacting the original Keaton scenes, becoming part of an archive of the originating film, referring back to it, exploding it while also containing it (Blocker, 2012, p. 207). Thinking through Blockers assertion and in light of my approach to creating *The ties that bind...*, where the process of remaking and repeating can hypothetically form archival relations with the originating material, I was attempting to possibly authorise *In Hot*

Pursuit as worthy of this, to be treated or understood as a series of archival relations. Through responding to the originating film, I established a number of constraints. I used the originating video clips' script verbatim, via a transcription of the dialogue, and as much as possible I duplicated the camera shots from the originating video. The set was laid out to approximate the set in the originating video, also including a flickering fireplace.

Nicholas Bourriaud, in the introduction to his book *Postproduction* (2000), asserts 'artists who insert their own work into that of others contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, ready-made and original work' (2010, p. 13). I similarly aimed to close the distance between the original, the remake and myself, as between 'production and consumption', and as Bourriaud recognises these cultural objects, the originating film, 'are already informed by other objects' (2010, p 13). These consuming and productive conditions meant that my creative approach was to solidify these pragmatic artefacts: the script, the layout of the set and camera angles from the originating video, to sustain the copy of what I saw as the essential elements. In doing so I accentuated the material, implying the importance of the originating video, but also, as Blocker suggests, potentially creating and extending an archive of the originating film within my version.

Encountering Bodies

In making *The ties that bind…* I began to consider how, as an artist, I encounter an artefact such as a film, and how this method of "meeting" becomes implicated in how the work is realised. In making the video for *The ties that bind…* performers Bradshaw and Rowden were tasked with developing their response to the script without seeing

the originating film. Their own bodily understanding and interpretation in the portrayal of the characters was a response only to the script and my direction. This was an important aspect of the process, where my focus was on the relationships between artefact, body and the performed script and how they were realised to camera, and then as live performances. This importance only became apparent to me through the process of rehearsing and shooting the video where I was able to witness the performers Rowden and Bradshaw, and the cameraman, constructing a new version of the originating film. The response to the originating film, in this case through the script, approximated set and my directing, was my attempt at realising a "just encountered" sense from the performers, where the performances are not nuanced and heavily rehearsed, but responsive and immediate.

The filmed and live performances paradoxically usurp the originating material while at the same time rely on it for its meaning, transmitted from the filmed bodies in *In Hot Pursuit* to 'new' bodies, those of Bradshaw and Rowden in *The ties that Bind….*. Rebecca Schneider, in her essay *Performance Remains*, discusses how the western historic object or document-oriented model of the archive fails to hold the body, it being a 'blind spot' that is unable to optically and sensorially capture the 'residue' of 'body to body transmission', and so risks being incomplete (2012, p. 141). Although she is discussing how performance is excluded from the archive through its 'liveness', there is a suggestion of a reconfiguring or extending of the archive through a 'counter-memory' that performance offers. The performing bodies of Bradshaw and Rowden did this to an extent with the complex narratives present in the originating video. I was attempting to challenge the 'arrested' archive described by Schneider (2012, p.145) that might be seen to exclude a film that exists online such as *In Hot Pursuit*. Performance making strategies

could also extend and augment how an archive can hold the live, be newly read, and begin to potentially legitimise or extend what might be considered archival.

The live performances *in The ties that bind…* were the most vital, changeable and dramatic part of the work. Diana Taylor also writes in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003) of the difficulties posed for an archive to hold culturally embodied and experienced memory, life being too complex to be reduced to written, and ultimately controlled, testimony and document. She uses the term 'repertoire' (2003, p. 36) to describe both what lies outside the archive as embodied 'passed on' information and techniques as well as a performative strategy of reassembling and revealing knowledge not found in the archive. This is not to exclude or valorise one or the other, the archive or the repertoire, but to recognise the unstable territory between the historic stable archive and performed fluid present. Taylor argues that 'instead of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of text and narratives, we might think of them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative descriptions' (2003, p. 16). These scenarios are the circumstances where the body is 'inserted into a frame' of established narrative situations, enacting knowledge (Taylor, 2003, p. 55). Taylor's thinking facilitates my approach to using an originating video such as *In Hot Pursuit*, to learn from copying, re-enacting and enabling new meanings to gain an enriched understanding of originating artefacts, archival or not, through a process of performing and making live. This realisation is a key methodology and strategy to further explore in developing this thesis.

The unstable ground created through reperforming the scenario presented in *In Hot Pursuit* is part of its energy; where difference enlightens aspects of the originating

content. I had intended for all three parts of *The ties that bind…* - the video, the performance and installation – to rely upon each other, to form a network between the works. This was to foreground the process of re-enacting. The set could be examined and seen in the video, then the performers could be watched live in the same set, which also referenced the performance in the video. Amelia Jones reasons that 'the point made by re-enactments, whether this is the intention of the re-enactor or not, is that the past is impossible to retrieve as it existed in the past' (2012, p. 17). A re-enactment is always a new and nuanced version of the original material. If I had set out to make an exact copy of *In Hot Pursuit*, I would have failed. Even though this was not my goal, it is echoed in my creating a directed performance to camera, fixed and unchangeable, and not unlike the artefact in an archive, able to be constantly re-read and reinterpreted while itself being static. To a large extent, the concept of the "perfect copy" was undermined by being presented alongside a live rendering, where the re-enactment, through the daily performances, was new every time.

One of the surprises for me at the time, on missing a number of performances and coming to see the last few (of 14), was how different the later performances were from the first one. This was to be expected as the performers inhabited the roles and became comfortable, transforming the interpretation of the script and creating a greater contrast with the video version. Yet it brought home the evolving nature of performance to re-render itself. This challenged not only the intended relationships the live performance had with *In Hot Pursuit* and its video 're-enactment', but also the relationship it had with itself. This enabled me to look through *The ties that bind…* to newly see and comprehend the originating video.

<u>Exceeding Itself</u>

Elin Diamond in *Performance and Cultural Politics* (1996) reinforces how a performance can 'exceed itself' and while 'performance embeds traces of other performances, it also produces experiences whose interpretation only partially depends on previous experience' (1996, p. 2). I did not feel the need for audience to see the originating video *In Hot Pursuit* to engage with the work. Yet it was important for me, as a creative strategy, to anchor the originating video through my re-make to camera. I also think now that I was forcing the issue of embedding the traces, e.g. the originating unchanged script, to make it clear how the performances came about, through a response to the original. The outcome of the work then was also a measure of yielding a difference, for me at least if not for the audience, from the original to the re-enacted. This was increasingly telling in the outcomes of the live daily performances that were not fixed, as each performance was different for the performers and consequently for the audience. The moment was just that, a moment, transient and unstable, where the work was able to exceed itself as each re-interpretation yielded new meanings every time. Because the live moment only exists while it is happening, this means that the body contains the account as embodied knowledge that is not fixed or easily recordable. Although dynamic and rewarding, the continually evolving nature of the performances, where the performers became more confident and comfortable, were less interesting to me, as they moved further from just encountering and responding. Caught on film and part of the first few live performances, the moments that where awkward and unknown were more tangible and for me ultimately more compelling.

If gesture and bodily knowledge cannot be wholly contained in the document/object-oriented archive, there might be value through the bodily encounter with it, a physical

response grounded on the historical materials. Inke Arns in her text *Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance* describes (2008, p. 43):

> History appears to be present at all times in all places; at the same time, however, this permanent availability of media representations renders all forms of authenticity increasingly remote…In this situation artistic re-enactments do not ask the naïve question about what really happened outside of the history represented in the media…instead asks what the images we see might mean concretely to us, if we were to experience these situations personally.

Live renderings transmit meaning body to body, where the knowledge is not explained but made available to be experienced. This dynamic interchange makes available through live performance a potency from the originating material, in this case *In Hot Pursuit*, that endures beyond the limits of its place, be it in an archive or online database. This concreting might be personal connections or the subjective experiences of the re-enactment that reinforce and becomes an abiding memory for the participants and audience alike, extending beyond an archive. In *The ties that bind…* potential new readings were made available, through the signals of a dissonance, or difference with the originating material.

Conclusion

By reflecting on *The ties that bind…* I have discovered the utility of the body as both translator and transmitter of the historic through being made live. Re-enacting *In Hot Pursuit* meant I was able to understand a new way to gain an insight into the originating film. What drove my enquiry when making *The ties that bind...* was a desire to expose the workings of the content and social mores of a culturally loaded video. Through re-enactment, I wanted to uncover what was being taught in the originating video. I wanted to find out if this was translatable and then re-communicable; to see how far I could go to generate contemporary meanings from the original through the re-enactment.

Rather than attempting to replicate and copy an original source, I reformed it so that meanings could be shifted and refocused, rather than replicated.

Through the process of creating the work, I discovered the re-reading afforded through the re-making, that extends the meaning of the originating video. Examining *The ties that bind…* has led me to question how much accuracy might be needed for something to be called a re-enactment. I understand now my approach to *In Hot Pursuit* was not to copy or duplicate the original. In realising difference as a place of productive dissonance, making *The ties that bind…* what artist Gerald Byrne describes as 'palpably vulnerable', suggests to me a methodological approach to take forward. The relationship between the original and the re-enacted might be inherent for this to work, but does not need to be explicit, as Elin Diamond states, a performance will always 'exceed itself' (1996, p. 2).

Taking this approach also means the outcomes of performances are unpredictable, flawed and capricious. This is not problematic as it emphasises my concern with assumptions of how archival understandings might begin to destabilise through a creative practice within this research project. What occurred was a form of productive usurping, where the originating material is extended through its remake, and where making live offers a way to "re-see" recent or historic materials.

The important outcomes of examining *The ties that bind*… was the richness I found in the early moments of Bradshaw's and Rowden's performances before they had the opportunity to fully rehearse or inhabit their roles. They were both coming to terms with the cautiously negotiating characters they had to perform as I began filming. The moving image work captured these early tentative performances. The initial live performances

were similarly tentative and earnest, as they were not entirely at ease with the roles. I am now attentive to this precarious moment of learning before becoming practised. This approach to archival sources shifts the emphasis to the performers negotiating what they could enact through their activities, rather than the ability to re-enact. Their stilted delivery created a satisfying dissonance that then became for me the focus of the performance. This leads me to see how this approach can map a tentative archival encounter, and a way to develop my archival relations that mirror my tentative approach as an artist to an archive.

This approach also suggests what meanings might result from the body performing awkwardly, as it becomes or is associated with an archive. Although I wanted, as much as possible, for all the elements in *The ties that bind…* - the staging, lighting, script – to perform equally, I have realised that I find the body to be the most compelling and energising to see and engage with. There is a potential to explore how the liveliness of initial encounters and responses can critique the archival materials in question. Although informed through re-enactment, this leads me to believe enactment itself might be enough, caught early and on camera. These new understandings inform the initial artistic research. In particular how I mediate the distance between the archive and the body, the artefact and the response, through strategic re-enactment focusing on the body of the performer, in order to lever a relationship I could have with the archive and understand how it starts to reflect me. Therefore, using re-enactment as an approach to understand an archive also becomes about how I am able to restructure my memory and the relationships that I seek with an archive, and how I recognise my role in mediating this.

CHAPTER 2: *Let's Go Bowling*

This chapter explores the process and outcomes by which I can meet an online archive through a creative practice. Drawing from the findings in the previous chapter, I am employing re-enactment as a methodology to explore archival footage, focusing on how I develop a new work: *Let's Go Bowling* (2016). This single channel video of eight minutes was made as a response to an instructional film of the same title, which was produced in 1955 to promote and teach ten pin bowling. In this chapter I discuss how I set about encountering the archival source through the embodied practices of performers Leah Dungay and Conor Clarke. I explore how Leah and Conor, as well as myself, are enabled to meet and make sense of the historical bodies in the archival moving images. The term 'body' here includes the sum total of all the gestures, movement, poses, postures that are presented in the originating films. As such, my version of *Let's Go Bowling* is simultaneously a performance to camera, a moving image work and an attempt capture an experiment. My approach attempts to embrace all of these different possibilities through continuing to develop how I meet the archive through performative and moving image practices. I will progress my critical understandings of this process through relevant theoretical considerations. I will continue to employ Urlow's archive thinking to reflexively support the ongoing creative development and understandings that evolve form the work.

Inke Arns has suggested that we might begin to make sense of the incessant stream of online media by developing a more refined understanding: 'if we were to experience these situations personally' (2008, p. 43). *Let's Go Bowling* draws upon embodied responses – experiencing archival material directly as Arns suggests – which are not prescribed but contingent on Leah and Conor's conscious subjective interpretation of the bowling film. This is a process of experimentation to decipher how I meet the archive and how different archival states suggest how I might respond to it.

In *The Medium is the Message*, Marshall McLuhan writes (2001, p. 7):

> In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.

If the archive is moved online, what is the 'new scale' as described by McLuhan, and how is it wrought or made clear by our interaction with it? When seeking online archives, I have taken a methodical approach to focus on the possible choices, as I am alert to the context of an archive being relevant. The Prelinger Archive suits my purposes in this instance as it aligns with my concerns around using archives: finding and rescuing ephemeral moving image such as advertising or Public Broadcast Services media and encouraging public access. Developed by Rick Prelinger, it is hosted online through the Internet Archive, which is 'a non-profit... offering permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars, people with disabilities, and the general public to historical collections that exist in digital format' (archive.org, 2015). The Prelinger Archive includes historical and contextual information about each item it holds. Rick Prelinger set about

collecting moving image material, described as film ephemera, that was made up of 'advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur' films (archive.org, 2015). Through the Prelinger search function, I was able to find the originating film *Let's Go Bowling* (Atlas Film Corporation, 1955)[3]. I was seeking films that instruct within the time frame set for this research project. Evolving from my approach to *The ties that bind...*, I was seeking the active body in the archives, moving image that shows how to accomplish a sports or activity related to health, wellbeing or improving yourself. The altruistic nature of the Prelinger Archive satisfied what seemed to be my increasing interest around self-betterment, a type of engineered social cohesion that the films I was looking for perpetuated, and the archive also mirrored this in its outward and open access approach.

This seeking was also shaped by my desire to find films that relate to my experience of being instructed as a young American boy – for instance, in learning how to bowl or play baseball, which I did at summer camp in the 1970s. This approach thinks through Diana Taylor's 'inserting the body in the frame' (2003, p. 33), a way of making sense of the archival and its possible relationship to me, focusing the content I am researching. Developing this relationship enthuses my approach in how I am able to engage in the re-expression of the originating film beyond its archival frame.

With the technological drive to digitise historic content, I feel an increasing sense of urgency to understand what it means when archives are dispersed among the deluge of online content. Without being told or directed, the seeking and finding becomes

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[3] This will be referred to as the originating film, to stop the confusion between my same named response made in 2016.

inventive as the authority of an archive is not brought to bear or maintained though the explicit experience of visiting an archive held in an institution. The lack of archival protocols framing and sustaining a relevance, normally transmitted by the whole experience of being in the archive,[4] is left to you to manage. Distinctions between material from an online archive, and that which lies outside it, becomes increasingly harder to discern. No less worthy, yet increasingly deregulated. Without the framework of an institution or guidance from the archivist or librarian, the provenance and context of an artefact is left for the artist to manage. I see an applicability in Walter Benjamin's discussion in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* on the process of untethering (2008, p. 11-12):

> Paying proper attention to these circumstances is indispensable for a view of art that has to do with the work of art in an age when it can be reproduced by technological means. The reason is that they herald what is here the crucial insight: its being reproducible by technological means frees the work or art, for the first time in history, from its existence as a parasite upon ritual.

Originally written in the early twentieth century, I find this reasoning applicable when considering distributed and dispersed visual media. I am interpreting 'parasite upon ritual' as the procedural relations created by an archive with the artefact. Benjamin states that artwork untethered is then susceptible to vagaries such as display or indeed politics to augment meaning. Although Benjamin, from the perspective of 1935, uses the process of photography to describe the notion of the meaninglessness of the original print holding a 'aura' (2008, p. 9), the dispersal of 'ritual' to sustain the technological manufactured art object emulates the difference, for me, of online and offline or analogue archives. There is something very different from meeting and experiencing the place and space of a physical archive, compared to dealing with a search return from a

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[4] By "whole experience" I mean the formality of the reading rooms, the rules governing how to behave and the specialist knowledge inherent in the archivist and librarians.

digital database.

Online archives might suggest a process of democratisation. A creative response to

historic materials would appear liberated from the ethical and historical considerations

that are reinforced through the rituals and protocols perpetuated when physically

visiting an institutional archive. Joanna Sassoon, in discussing archived photographic

collections, reflects on the process of digitalisation and re-writing material (2007, p.

316):

> By amalgamating the aesthetic content of photographs with the contemporary
> politics of the [digital] marketplace economy institutions are complicit in creating
> new discursive systems which may obliterate previous meanings while lending
> their authority to a registering of the truth of the image in the new digital
> context.

Sassoon describes how an artefact's conversion into digital space commodifies above

and beyond what could be considered its archival traits[5], its clearly denoted provenance

and its material richness, lost or submerged in translation. That would not only leave the

artefact at the mercy of the 'marketplace' but is also problematic for the institutions

that are dematerialising their collections. To work with digitised archives is to work

through the new economy there are situated in, what Sassoon views as a 'new digital

context' for online media. My question, then, is do I need to maintain a clear relationship

with an archive through the creative process? What if the digitised artefacts become

components and are treated as such; not kept whole, governable or traceable? Given

this, and as a possible response, artist Hito Steyerl in *The Wretched of the Screen* (2012)

posits that post-structural artists 'are not after production, rather we are in a state in

which production is endlessly recycled, repeated, copied, humbled, and renewed' (2012,

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[5] I am using the term archival to denote pertaining to archives.

p.183). I see Steyerl's 'in a state' as a part of the response to how online archive materials are situated in their new digital context. In light of this I can't help but think there is an erosion, positive or not, of the stewarding of historic material once it enters the online realm.

I do not produce wholly new or, as I have described, untethered work, inspired by the content I come across. The artwork I produce, as is the case with *Let's Go Bowling*, is contingent on the relationships and provenance of the materials and ideas at play within the original artefact, creating as I see it a new mix or context. After my incursion, the archive will remain the same, albeit with possible new understandings made available through my creative and productive 'recycling'. I do not see my work in isolation from the process it has manifested from. As Alex Potts writes in *The Artwork, the Archive, and the Living Moment* (2008), the identify of 'no work of art, however object based [...] can be reduced entirely to its status as a material thing, in isolation from the mind-set that constitutes it as art' (2008, p. 119). This understanding speaks to the heart of my approach in working with archives, as with *Let's Go Bowling*. My intention throughout the process of making my new response is to maintain a path back to the original. The originating relationship is important, as I see it needing to be distinguishable and not entirely erased. I want to keep this relationship palpable and present in the work, including a recognition of the authors, collaborators and systems that maintain the original artefact, in this case, the Prelinger Archive. I use the same title as the originating video; looking for one version will potentially find the other, maintaining the relationship and acknowledging a debt to it, shoring up the relationship while it resides online.

The Archive Thinker

My shoring up of these relations is focused through what artist Uriel Orlow in his text

Latent Archives, Roving Lens (2006), describes as an 'archive thinker', echoing my own

methodology. He describes the archive thinker's practice as (2006, p. 35):

> not principally engaged in the construction of new archives or in the conducting
> of research into existing ones. And while they might do both of these things, they
> are above all engaged in deconstructing the notion of the archive itself. They
> reflect on the archive as something which is never fixed in meaning or materials,
> but is nevertheless here, largely invisible yet at the same time monumental,
> constantly about to appear and disappear, latent.

I understand Urlow's description of the archive thinker being centred on a type of belief

system of the archive, described by Derrida as a place that governs artefacts, where

credibility is perpetuated in an archival system (Derrida, 2002, p.02). Archive thinking

contemplates the various states of an archive and its creative potential. Not unlike the

custodial position of the archivist, being an archive thinker affords me some distance

while working through an archive to be able to occasionally stand back and read the

archive as a whole.

The archive thinking mode augments Foster's 'archival impulse' (Foster, 2004, p. 22)

described in the introduction to this thesis. The mode of archive thinker reflects on

larger archival mores and issues, whereas Foster's impulse drives an instinctive creative

response to the material of the archive. I see myself as operating between these two

states, where they complement but also test each other. The archive thinker's

contemplation of Foster's 'belatedness' is transformed through an impulsive and

creative 'becomingness' (Foster, 2004, p. 22); first distant, then close, and distant again.

These different perspectives allow me to explore how particular archived histories might

have meaning in the present by considering the conditions within which they are

articulated and kept. Archive thinking enables me to discuss, map and critically organise my creative activities, enabling me to then subjectively and impulsively respond to material in and through an archive.

Using extant materials from an online archive causes me to reflect on contemporary conditions in which we are exposed to multitudes of unattributed images. The distinctiveness or relevancy of an online archive is less assured than Derrida's description of the place and space of a physical archive (2002, p.02). As an archive thinker, I cannot dissociate the mechanism by which archives are accessed and shared from how they are understood and have meaning attributed to them. With an online archive there is no need to travel to it or obey any rules or obligations one might have when entering a public or institutional library. The content, be it a 14th century image uploaded by the British Library to Flickr or a 1950s bowling film from the Prelinger Archive, can be instantly shared across diverse online platforms, untethered from its archival moorings. Meanings can be mixed and their archival authenticities blurred. Brad Troemel succinctly writes 'Today, online, there is no home base: no building or context that contains and describes art in a way that uniformly attributes meaning for all' (2014, p. 39).

Although Troemel is considering how art production can become recommodified in virtual space, I believe his proposition is transposable when considering online archives. The ubiquity of the experience of accessing databases online problematises how archives are experienced, where content can move from a resource such as the Prelinger Archive and become shared across multiple social media platforms, its provenance broken as it co-exists with the mass of content found online. In thinking through this

47

experience from the perspective of the user, I am concerned with how an artefact's

archival 'aura', to borrow from Benjamin, can be regained (2008, p. 9). The originating

film, *Let's Go Bowling* (1955)*,* is responded to in light of this. I acknowledge I cannot fully

resuscitate or reconstruct the film-as-artefact's original 'aura' in a Benjaminian sense,

but I can create a new sense of belief and possible new archival rituals (Benjamin, 2008,

p. 12) by re-enacting it.

A Film About Bowling

In trying to understand how archival moving image can maintain its utility, I chose a film

demonstrating ten pin bowling, which I remember being taught myself and is entirely

useful if you want to learn how to bowl. As mentioned earlier, the subjective rationale

for choosing films to work with has become increasingly important to me. It is a focus

and anchor in what could be an endless searching and finding of content. I have also

found it useful to think of my engagement with archives, the process of seeking, in light

of Celeste Olalquiaga's text *Dead Stock: The Researcher as Collector of Failed Goods*,

where she describes archival seeking as a form of subjective collecting (2008, p. 33):

> Research, as the word indicates, is about searching repeatedly, systematically,
> obsessively, the proof being that once we have found what we were supposedly
> looking for, we start all over again. In this sense, research is akin to collecting:
> what is collected matters less than the process it engages and its ability to
> become an all-consuming endeavour.

Once collected, the idea of resuscitating the experience of bowling, or of being taught

how to bowl, becomes compelling to me. The archival film echoed my recollection of

being taught and learning how to bowl, and so in turn I begin to recognise myself within

the archive. This act of finding/possessing the archival object is satisfying, but not

enough. I want to inhabit my finds, attempt to enter a relationship which is more meaningful than simply acknowledging its existence.

Tempering this subjective approach are the pragmatics of the films I am selecting at this stage offering the most utility for me to generate enactments from. *Let's Go Bowling* (1955)*, the originating video,* was chosen because it contains full body movement, including technical details via close ups of bowling techniques. The film was visually very descriptive, and the instructions were reinforced by an American voiceover typical of its time that resonated and stood out, created by the Bowling Proprietor's Association of America to promote the sport. Although clearly part of a marketing campaign to encourage greater use of the bowling alley and in turn increase profits,[6] it was also an expression of the cultural values of its time related to prosperity, idealism, gender and race.[7] Bowling is portrayed as perpetuating American idealism and eagerness, with the film's assumed moral authority confirming that if you learnt to bowl (shown in Figure 4), you will be "clean".

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[6] There was nearly a doubling of bowling alleys from 6,600 in 1955 to 11,000 in 1963, with users going from 'less than three million to seven million' (McDuling, 2014).

[7] I am making this assumption though the complete lack of any representations of ethnic diversity beyond Caucasian North Americans.
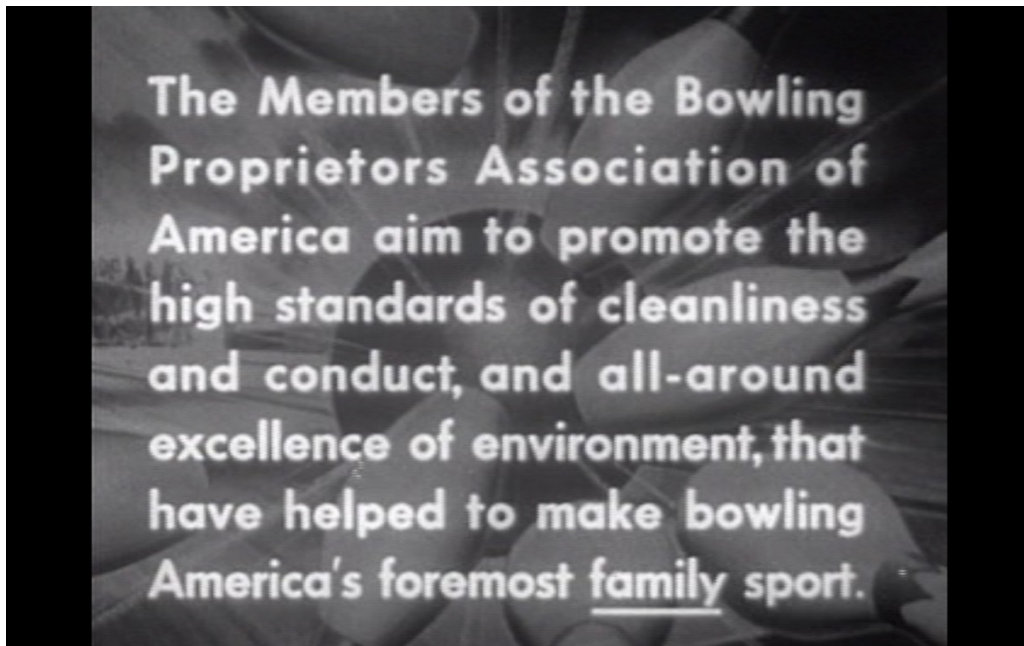
Figure 4 *Let's Go Bowling* (1955), still.

The film is part of what Alison Landsberg in her book *Prosthetic Memory: The*

Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture describes as a

new type 'public cultural memory' by stating that (2004, p. 2):

> Prosthetic memory emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experimental site such as a movie theatre or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history.

The hegemonic power of film can teach a viewer, in the case of *Let's Go Bowling* (1955),

how to be an American; how to be athletic, whole and hearty, by conforming into a

neatly presented society. The suturing that Landsberg suggests also describes a

willingness of the viewer to bodily metabolise the narrative of this aspect of North

American culture. I want to test this pull to convince, through the instruction. What can

it teach us if translated bodily? Removing the opportunity to see the film in its fullest

socialising sense, and contemporised by my enactment of it, does it still have the ability

to offer a route into a specific culture?

In preparation for the enactment to camera, I made the decision to remove the narrative component from the originating film, where the story presents a bowler reluctant to play. I felt the dialogue and interplay between the film's characters was not needed for the enactment of the taught bowling. I wanted to utilise the instructors and learners depicted in the originating film to demonstrate bowling. The performers, Leah and Conor, could then focus on and respond to the bowling instructions without the constructed narrative preamble of the characters getting to the bowling alley. I did not want to have to engage the film's narrative constructs in the re-enactment, the specific roles of the characters in the originating film. In developing my version of *Let's Go Bowling*, I wanted to set up conditions where the response by Leah and Conor was to the bodies in the context that were presented to them, in a studio, on screen. This was not a process of watching a complete video and re-enacting it but making apparent the activity structured around learning how to bowl, actively watching the bodies in the originating film rather than simply seeing them.[8]

I wanted this re-enactment to be simplified, but also different, where the difference is realised through the responding bodies of the performers, not in copying the characters of the originating film. This was not to disregard that the originating film could not be still 'read': it still had the loaded signifiers made up the period costume, performed gender, setting of the film, its redolent prosthetic memory described earlier. Leah and Conor were asked to attempt to copy the bowling as instructed and possibly learn to bowl through engaging with the originating film, where their bodies attempt to mimic in order to learn. In a sense, they potentially started to create their own narrative on

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[8] I use the terms 'looking' and 'watching' as active, being engaged in critically viewing over a period of time, and 'seeing' as less active, and potentially less critically engaged and fleeting.

film through this, transforming their watching into action. This disconnect between the originating video and how an audience would see my version of it, was an important method in understanding what I see as manifesting the dissolving continuities when an archive is placed online. I wanted to establish a way to visually critique this, stripping out the original contextual nuances through the performance of it, and replacing them with my newly mediated ones.

I took a technically simplified approach in the style of filming. It was informed in the main by choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer's *Trio Film* (1968), which I saw as part of the exhibition 'Yvonne Rainer: Dance Works' at Raven Row, London, in 2014. In *Trio Film*, shot by Phil Niblock, two performers, Becky Arnold and Steve Paxton, both nude, pass a large white ball to each other. The camera is mostly static, capturing the minimal choreographed movements. Rainer's way of making, particularly in regard to film, mediates between creating a spectacle out of the ordinary and filming an experiment. The nude athletic bodies where compelling; the relationship they had to the ball, with each other, and what it meant for the viewer to watch this on film. I was intrigued by what I saw as a form of minimalist construction, leaving their bodies to be, in Rainer's words, 'decorous' (Lambert-Beatty, 2008, p. 189). When their bodies leave the frame wholly or in part, the camera does not cut to a close-up or a point of view to maintain a filmic narrative. There is humour built into *Trio Film*, starting off with the performers appearing straight faced and with serious intent, and ending 'when Arnold's "professional detachment" crumbles into unabashed glee' (Rainer in Lambert-Beatty, 2008, p. 191). The camera seems to be present regardless of the performers, as a silent but present witness. I see the camera's view as Rainer's watching the performance, and by proxy ours, capturing its complexity but also reframing the minimalist mundane

choreography. The film moves towards 'seeing difficulty' (Lambert-Beatty, 2008, p. 193), in the tension of it being neither a performance for camera nor a film capturing a performance. In *Yvonne Rainer and the Recuperation of Everyday Life* Noel Carroll describes this more clearly (2003, p. 69):

> Though her style is avant-garde, in her attention to the everyday, to the convergences and divergences of the forces that mould it, to its contradictions, its structures, its incongruities, and untotalized messiness, she is some kind of realist.

I wanted to create moving image work that had a sense of this 'kind of realist' but also that highlighted the problematics of being a subjective participant. Rainer's approach helps me frame how I want the performers to appear on film, in light of the enacted bowling, but also becomes a motif or trope in making the work.

Inspired by Rainer's approach to filming the performers in action, I tested the filming with the camera in one position, suggesting the viewpoint of an active observer, capturing everything that took place without comment. I also adopted the following procedures defined by Bill Nichols for documentary film-making. The first arises from an 'observational mode', where the 'filmmaker adopts a particular method of presentation "on the scene" in which he or she appears to be invisible and non-participatory' (2010, p.175). The second is 'expository', where the documentary format is explained through a 'single unifying source' (2010, p. 145). As Nichols argues, these are not exclusive modes; filmmakers have incorporated and combined these approaches as well as utilising other methods in making documentary films. These modes correlate with the planning of the filming of *Let's Go Bowling*. As can be seen in Figure 5 below, the left-hand side of the diagram represents fictional film, which includes films that are readily identifiable as works that conjure up an imaginary world populated by actors who play

assigned roles (characters) (2010, p. 144). On the right-hand side of the diagram, non-fiction includes (2010, p. 144):

> Documentary film, informational or 'how to' films, scientific films, surveillance footage, and more. Here we find the majority of documentary films that are identifiable by (1) their representations in sound and image of a pre-existing [sic], historical world, (2) their reliance on social actors who present themselves rather than take on assigned roles, and (3) the intricate relationship that may arise between the interaction of the filmmakers and the film's social actors who clearly co-exist in the same historical world.

He suggests re-enactment as being hybrid in nature, sitting between fictional and non-fictional film, borrowing techniques and conventions form both, but importantly based upon pre-existing events or histories. It is telling that Nichols places re-enactments amongst 'mockumentaries' and 'neo-realism', reinforcing the ideas of being of or almost like its non-fiction counterpart. My techniques in making *Let's Go Bowling* were designed to remind the viewer of the same.
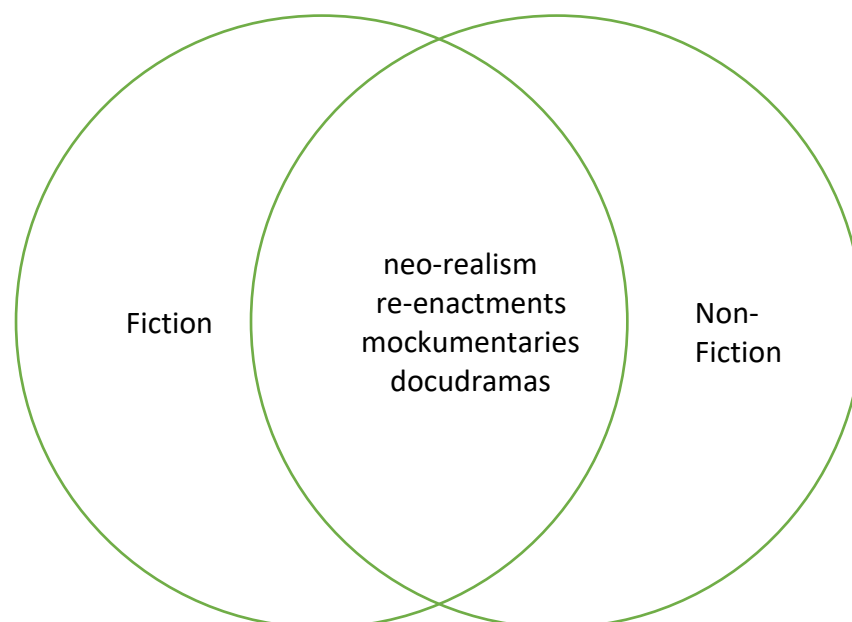
Figure 5. Table 6.1. The Relation of Fiction to Nonfiction (2010, p. 145)

Performance to Camera

On the day of filming, I showed the originating film to Leah and Conor without preamble to reduce the possibly of them inhabiting or 'acting'. They did not get to preview the film or rehearse the movements. I asked both to enact the bodily instruction as they saw and understood it, attempting to encourage Rainer's 'seeing difficulty' (Lambert-Beatty, 2008, p. 10). Although I set up the conditions of the filming, so in essence I was a director, I wanted the performers to actively decode and then enact the instructions in the original film. Like Rainer, I stood back to watch the process unfold, while gently shaping how the process of performing and filming plays out. As part of my research methodology, I wanted to limit the number of attempts by the performers so they could not inhabit the roles.

Figure 6 *Let's Go Bowling* (2015), space used for filming.

I wanted the bodies of the two performers to be highlighted, not to be as 'decorous' as the nude performers in *Trio Film*, but clearly foregrounded. Their background is a black curtain, in a theatrical studio space without distinctive character (see Figure 6 above). It was an uncluttered space in which to film, with no props; the performers were asked to wear relatively neutral attire under non-dramatic lighting. I was aware that it is not possible to create a neutral space; these limitations are an attempt to mitigate the conditions that Foucault describes in his chapter the 'Formation of Objects' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002, p. 49):

> The conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions required if one is to 'say anything' about it, and if several people are to say different things about it, the conditions necessary if it is to exist in relation to other objects, if it is to establish with them relations of resemblance, proximity, distance, difference, transformation – as we can see, these conditions are many and imposing…the object does not wait in limbo … It exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations.

The location used to film the performance was not a bowling alley or a definable location; more accurately, it was an uncluttered studio. By removing the connotative narrative material of the originating footage – that is, dress, scene lighting and location of the bowling alley – I attempted to simplify the reading of the original footage for the performers, to enable the witnessing and capturing of an immediate response to the originating film as archival artefact. I wanted to limit the relations possible, simplify the condition in which the performance manifests. Although not a case of erasing context, the site of the studio at least enabled me to narrow this so the presence of Leah and Conor was hopefully louder than the location they operated within.

Figure 7. *Let's Go Bowling* (2016), still.

Figure 8 *Let's Go Bowling* (1955), still.

In setting up, and doing my best to reduce the circumstances of the re-enactment for the performers, I wanted Leah and Conor to be free from the need to fully negotiate the material and cultural contexts of the originating footage – for example, not having to respond to the weight of a bowling ball, or to wear appropriate costume or bowling

shoes, or deal with a complex copied location. I wanted them to as simply as possible

manage a response to the originating artefact. Conor in Figure 7 copies the gesture of

the instructor, as shown in Figure 8. At this point, it is important for me to look and

watch this taking place, and not experience it as a performer myself. Paul Clarke in his

text *Performing Art History* discusses two strands of curatorial or artistic re-enactment;

firstly, re-enactment as reconstruction, forensically or formally applied, and secondly

(2018, p. 121):

> The other distinctive strand of artistic re-enactments resists such drives to historicise or monumentalise performance, instead comprising of creative interpretations, responses or cover versions, which do not aim to emulate, but rather to transform and critically remake pasts works for present contexts.

I wanted some distance to be able to view the performers' responses to the originating

film; to reason what could be taking place when a body, an individual, meets an archival

artefact that tells them how to bowl, and do just that. This was my attempt at managing

these relations manifested by Leah and Conor through their enactment of the bowling

instruction. I wanted a new context to understand the originating film as Clarke

describes. The sense making of these actions in isolation, away from the bowling alley

and instructor, is a test to see what is possible through the body to 'transform and

critically remake' (2018, p. 121).

How Not to Bowl

To be clear, the new moving image work, *Let's Go Bowling* (2016) will not teach a viewer

how to bowl. My approach to the planning for the performance to camera was in much

the same way that I imagine in the making of Rainer's *Trio Film*. Being an experiment

does not, as I see it, exclude it from being a performance. Leah and Conor, as a proxy

for me, physically attempted to make sense of the online artefact, without the complex

social interaction with an archivist, librarian or expert to do this. I did not purposely set out to limit the potential of the performers to acquire any expertise in bowling, I wanted their focus to be on how they could articulate the observed bowling moves and gestures from the originating film. This process was meant to be generative, where Leah and Conor had a measure of freedom to respond beyond my light touch instruction, and in Rainer's words, maintain a 'professional detachment' (Rainer in Lambert-Beatty, 2008, p. 191). At this point I could not fully anticipate how the performance and the filming would play out. The focus was not on copying the scenographic[9] space of the originating footage, but to generate enacted content from the instruction, physically reinterpreting and documenting the circumstances in which the body is placed centrally as an interlocutor and translator of an archival source.

Both Leah and Conor confirmed that their tactic was to 'perform the learning,' a phrase coined by Conor to describe how he realised his response to the originating film. The lack of a bowling ball limits the specifics of their movements by making the performances appear like a caricature of bowling, rather than an accurate rendering of what they watch in the originating footage. The focus for them was not on the actors' roles in the originating film but in attempting to recreate their movements and bowling gestures. Leah and Conor described being aware of the camera in the studio but not of the camera in the originating footage. This is interesting because it describes Leah and Conor's attempt at directing their action of the performance to me, through the camera. This would suggest that they are performing for me as the director, even if I did not tell them to do so.

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[9] Meaning the lighting, props, costume, stage/location, set design as an assemblage is reconstituted.

What is also revelatory was how their movements were interesting to watch. This raises questions for future consideration including to whom the performers should be performing. The performers in the original film were acting 'naturalistically', as if there was no camera in the space. For Leah and Conor, the constraints of the space meant they had to constantly adapt during the filming by curtailing their steps and adjusting the angle of their body. We let each sequence finish and then initiated another take if needed. I wanted to ensure we had filmed the material as planned both technically and aesthetically.

For the performers there was a tension between learning, and translating that learning, of being right and making the correct stance or gesture copied from the originating footage. My approach was to reimagine how archives are encountered, where rather than seeing the footage, the performances are a creative strategy to test the stability of watching, reading and understanding an archival source. The performers then have little choice but to take the originating footage more seriously than most people surfing the web might. The process was one of immediate copying rather than planned and rehearsed formal re-enactment, where I encouraged the performers to inhabit the position of learners. I was not concerned with how the gestures played out, only that they did them. It was enough that there was intent from the performers to do the best they could within the constraints they were operating within. Their enactment of the instruction was resuscitated from the originating film through their bodies and then captured on film. In one sense the enacted gestures are attempts at copying, but as soon as Leah and then Conor started to enact the instruction, I understood this as transmitting the archival material, and echo of its archival aura, made different and distinct form the

originating footage, but no less tied to its original source, a possible extension of *Let's Go Bowling* (1955) itself.

In Leah and Conor's articulation of the movement, technique and action, there was also a transfer of the gestures from the originating film as they are transposed a number of times and adapted. In stripping out the original signifiers and props, I degraded the possibility of their accurately repeating the instruction of the originating film, producing less a re-enactment and more an enacted response. Emma Cocker in her essay on repeated tasks and failure *Over and Over, Again and Again*, states 'the shifting of the position between investment and indifference, seriousness and non-seriousness, gravity and levity serves to rupture or destabilise the authority of the rule while still keeping it in place' (2010, p. 154). The performers shifted the rule of the originating film, the exacting bowling instructions, while reinforcing it in their response. As highlighted by Cocker, this relies upon, and is sustained by, the originating film. The repeated task was achieved, and yet of no use to someone watching to learn how to bowl due to the many ways the re-enactment was made potentially incomprehensible through my directorial decisions. The video frame curtailed their movement, the bowling gestures were nonsensical without a bowling ball. The 'absurdity'[10] I encouraged, and its compelling outcomes, can be understood through Martin Esslin's ideas in *The Theatre of the Absurd*. He describes an audience faced with seeming incomprehension of a play where (1960, p. 5):

> It is impossible to identify oneself with the characters one does not understand or whose motives remain a closed book, and so the distance between the public and the happenings on stage can be maintained. Emotional identification with the characters is replaced by a puzzled, critical attention.

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[10] Esslin's use of absurdity relates directly to Albert Camus's reading of existential meaningless via endless repetition such as discussed in his text *The Myth of Sisyphus, 1942.*

Where the original film, *Let's Go Bowling,* perpetuated the idea of an all-American sport, the translation I made was at odds with its original intention, although 'they yet remain recognizable somehow related to real life with *its* absurdity' (Esslin, 1960, p. 5). Esslin is discussing live performance, but I believe this can be applied to moving image work. I wanted the critical attention to lie in the active watching of the bowl-less bowling as performed by Leah and Conor, with its apparent absurdity, a critical attention also asked of any possible audience for the resulting work.

Conclusion

In this chapter I contextualised the first practice outcome of the thesis, *Let's Go Bowling*. I discovered that the performers could simultaneously be instructors; their rendering of the originating footage becomes a new iteration of the archived film. My original goal was to explore methods to reveal new knowledge in the originating footage, and ostensibly an archive, through following instructions. In doing so I discovered how physical actions and gestures might exist and expand beyond the confines of the archive, not simply in relation to it, generating new understandings of it despite this relationship. This compelling aspect arose in how the performers responded to the originating footage. Rather than repeat or fashion a version of what they saw, they 'performed the learning'. The outcome was a moving image film that captured a performed enactment, where Leah and Conor engaged in a series of scenarios and gestures that mapped how the body responds to moving image. An observer of the new work does not witness the learning of how to bowl, but rather how to perform learning how to bowl.

Another outcome was the emergence of a type of degradation that could characterise

elements of the performances in this chapter. It is clear that although I set out to create a re-enactment of *Let's Go Bowling* (1955)*,* I was experimenting with how I make sense of McLuhan's new scale (2001, p. 7) as it applies to an online archive. I was reducing the potential for Leah and Conor to be affected in the experience, limiting their ability to inhabit the roles and location of the original film. When planning the space and place of my version of *Let's Go Bowling*; the empty studio, no costumes or props, I was keen to insert the body in the frame, following Taylor's assertion (2003, p.33) and foreground the performances to camera. I realised that I wanted to be clear about how I see the experience of meeting a digital archive through an eroding sense of authenticity with the relationship the originating clip has with an archive, once online. For the performers or performance to not fully inhabit or assume the roles in the originating footage that I select is a significant methodological development. This approach, creating the dissonance as Esslin (1960, p. 5) and Cocker (2010, p. 154) both describe, has yielded not only a creative outcome but also a potential in my aim to reveal new ways to read, test and draw further questions from the dynamic and complex relationship between the body and an archive.

The strategies used in making *Let's Go Bowling* take an approach to art making with historical material that is physically experienced. This includes not rehearsing the enactments, creating the simplest or least complex filming situations, and carefully referring to the originating films, without presenting them in the final version. I see the archive thinker as an active agent who facilitates the re-making of an archive at the moment of engagement, as part activator, archivist and inquisitor. It has also become clear that the action of searching, responding, then finding a way to release an artefact, making it live, is a method through which I am attempting to find myself while

reconstituting an online artefact's archival aura. Olalquiaga concludes that (2008, p. 43):

> Research is taking stock of cultural merchandise, as well as other personal baggage often tagged onto it, and attempting to re-establish its value anew, whether to discard and leave it behind or bring it back into circulation. It is a way of "finding" ourselves, quite literally, through an activity where subject and object are interwoven enough to become indistinguishable. It is going through the "trash of history" as Benjamin might have called it: rummaging through piles of dead stock, either fetishized as the objects of collections, formalised in the documents of archives, or scattered in those residues of experience we call memories. Reconstituting them provides us with enormous pleasure of getting in touch with something that we thought forever lost, or even non-existent, but that was there all along.

The reconstituting of the source material is a reflection of my desire to bring an archive into the light, consolidating a memory, my lived experience. In the case of *Let's Go Bowling* I am attempting to charge it with the same absorbing energy and dynamism through the performing of it, performing the learning to find myself. This is not to deny the ability of the originating film to offer the viewer a way to absorb a particular aspect of North American life, as problematic as this is through a contemporary understanding of race, ethnicity and gender. My version is an interpretation of Landsberg's prosthetic memory, testing what is transmutable through the body, evoking 'a more public past, a past that is not at all privatised' (Landsberg, 2004, p. 143), and attempting to come to terms with how the original *Let's Go Bowling* is now more singularly viewed and accessed, yet dispersed to an online public.

Chapter 3 - Who's the Expert?

This chapter reflects on the outcomes of *Let's Go Bowling* (2016), exploring my practice methodology and the developing critical enquiry realised through the artwork. I start by describing how an early edit of the video was examined and responded to in a group critique, and the effects this had on the development of the work. This includes reassessing Uriel Orlow's archive thinking at this stage of the project, and the place of the art critique in supporting my reflexive practice. Through the performances to camera of Leah Dungay and Conor Clarke, I examine how I came to realise my concerns with the eroding protocols of online archives, framed through a discussion of performance practices and re-enactment from Rebecca Schneider, Rod Dickinson and Richard Schechner. While questioning how I can perform archival coherence from an online source, I examine the different archival meanings made through the performing body in *Let's Go Bowling*. This is not to say that the body is not continuously performing, but through this work I appraise my desire to be a conscientious user of an archive and how I am able to utilise re-enactment as a critique of this. I come to terms with the complicated slippage between facilitator, director and artist, and how experiencing and witnessing becomes increasingly important to the development of my creative process.

Group Critique

I am sympathetic to the need to receive feedback when producing work and, as in this case, potentially complicating unfinished work to do this. At this stage in the project, I wanted to find a way to stand back from the work in order to assess it more clearly, and the situation to do this in would be a critique. I was invited to present a work-in progress edit of *Let's Go Bowling* in a group critique with three other artists and led by Lindsay

Seers[11]. This early edit consisted of short sections of the originating film interspersed with the newly filmed performances. The critique would be incredibly useful to test whether presenting the originating film alongside my re-enactment, within one work, was synergistic in increasing or heightening what could be described as a bad remake. I wanted to know if it would undermine subtleties at play in the filmed performances that needed to be seen in isolation, separate from the originating clips to be understood. In discussing the usefulness of the art critique, Roddy Hunter states (2013, p. 18):

> The main purpose of a crit is to enable an artist to gain critical distance from their emerging work. It allows them to understand the different perspectives on their work when displayed in a particular set of the conditions. They can see how the work exists on its own terms and realise that their intention is not the thing that is primary. The artist will be able to make decisions about the work that they may have not been able to make on their own and also understand that there may be something that has happened in that process that is unexpected, that might provide a solution to a problem that they didn't know they had.

Hunter explains how exposing artwork in a critique is part of coming to terms with alternative interpretations of the work that might have not been intended, while also experiencing the work through a new audience. The artist has to sit back and acknowledge the alternative readings from the group. This process also reinforced the nature of the relationship I was able to have with the originating video as a form of tenure, a period where the re-articulation of the artefact is an increment, open to many readings. My version of *Let's Go Bowling* might reveal new readings, but these readings will also pass, as new interpretations will always be available. In this case to an audience that will experience both parts of the originating footage and the newly filmed enactments of the same. This felt like an appropriate method, that aligned with my

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[11] The group consisted of artists Stephen Smith, Ryan Curtis and Vicki Fear at Plymouth Arts Centre, 17th Sept, 2015

mode of archive thinking to gain a better understanding of the consequences *Let's Go Bowling* had on the originating material, and vice versa.

I was aware of the spectacle of the visually rich historic filmed material and how it can captivate through its nostalgic layered moving images. I acknowledge that being captivated is part of my creative process - Foster's impulsive archive (2004) – when looking amongst period films, becoming entranced or inspired by what I find. However, I did not want to create a work that encouraged the viewer to compare the original footage and mine. As with *The ties that bind…* I only ever revealed limited aspects or elements of the originating material to an audience when realising a response to it. What I did want to attempt was to signal the provenance of the material, its place in a history and in the archive, but not to let this override the performed responses by Leah and Conor. This becomes very clear in how the group in the critique responded to the draft edit that did include a number of clips from the originating video.

The feedback from the group was that my video footage lacked a visual 'weight', quite literally in the case of the missing bowling ball, when seen alongside the originating footage. My re-enactment purposely avoided carrying the visual and contextual richness available in the originating video, in what I would describe as a wry take on being as plain as possible. I did this to foreground the bodies of the performers enacting the instruction, making evident the present contemporary intersecting with the past. It was not my intention to set up a comparative relationship for the viewer of the two versions through the early edit. I sought to construct a visual relationship from the originating film to the performers, that I then captured, that an audience can then observe; meaning Leah and Conor watching and responding is the archival encounter, and the

film is a record of that. The tension from the slippage – the lack of an accurate re-enactment – is not overtly challenging for the performers, as they see the originating film and respond to that. They are not seeing themselves not accurately bowling, and while performing, remain in contact with the archival source. The tension appears when a viewer of the film tries to make sense of the re-enactment, the lack of bowling ball and the dissonance between the voice-over and the actions of the performers. Rod Dickinson describes how the dissonance between how the re-enactment and original 'enactment' are responded to, can be used in a similar way (Dickinson in Arns, 2008, p. 61):

> I am very consciously focused on events that were heavily mediated in their original form. My hope with these pieces is that the audience's direct experience of the live performance is constantly undercut by their knowledge of the layers of mediation that are at play in both the original historical event and my double of it.

Although I was not showing live work, there was a 'doubling' of the actions of the bowlers in the performance to camera, an undercutting of the instruction being shown in the film. This was made all the more apparent in the early-edit film shown in the group critique. The originating footage is visually interesting, and clearly different to the response I made of it as shown below in Figures 9 and 10. My aim was to reveal meaning and to make sense by enacting the instruction.

Figure 9. *Let's Go Bowling* (1955), still.

Figure 10. *Let's Go Bowling* (2016), still.

In the critique there was a discussion around the rich qualities of the originating footage presented. They were captivated by the clips of the 1950s, their displays of gender, social subject matter and ten pin bowling. The group saw the originating footage as having weight, or rather, an authenticity. It highlighted how using the originating footage with my enactment worked against my intention to emphasise how the archive can be read bodily and responded to; being different every time. It was not my aim to

so clearly create a dissonance between the two versions, but rather something subtler. For the newly filmed performances to gain some of this authenticity, it needed to be seen without the originating footage, therefore gaining its own "weight".

On first viewing the originating film *Let's Go Bowling*, the practical and persuasive nature of the bowling instructors and narrator persuasively encouraged me to want to bowl. I comprehended this as a dynamic potential of an archive's use: to transmit knowledge for the body to articulate and enact, and not to solely watch and listen, creating new possible relationships with archival material. In her essay *Performance Remains*, Rebecca Schneider considers how performance can produce different remains than those of the archive, stating (2012, p.146):

> Artists…attempt to unpack a way in which performance (or action, or act) remains – but remains differently. Such works are interested in the ways in which history is not limited to the imperial domain of the document, or in which history is not "lost" though body-to-body transmission.

Schneider's assertion also raises the question of how histories might leak out of an archive if performed, existing beyond the moment and so becoming more available. Although *Let's Go Bowling* was in part a performance to camera and not live, it nevertheless captures the body retelling the instruction of bowling from an archival source and testing how a performance can make the archive film remain outside the archive, live and present. This raises the question of my role in articulating an archived record.

Moving forward with the feedback from the critique, I did not want the work, and particularly the performance to camera, to be read as a comparison to the originating film of *Let's Go Bowling*. This would focus the audience's attention on the differences,

seeing beyond the success or failure of that, and would yield a different video. What I did decide to take forward was the narrator's voiceover from the originating film, as a means to shape the impetus of the filmed performances. The voice of the narrator was evocative, compelling and entirely non-visual and it meant I could have a dynamic element of the originating film present in my response. The significance of the originating film is not then entirely erased, maintaining a presence. In terms of the process of editing, it was a pragmatic tool to maintain in sync with the performers' responses to the originating footage.

Reflecting on Bill Nichol's description in Chapter 2 of how re-enactments (as part of documentary film making) take or borrow meaning, the voiceover is clearly from the past and alludes to a larger context, creating a nuanced relationship to the enactment. Including the voiceover, with its sense of being from another film at another time, refers back to an archival source. The viewer is not able to fully immerse themselves in the same way the performers are able to, and get my proxy response, flawed as a copy. Yet, despite the instability of potentially incoherent elements – the performers without a bowling ball and a voice from another time – it is possible to make some sense of what is taking place. This is my response to the originating film, but also my expression of how I might be able to approach an archive, and what I see as problematic in dealing with truncated archival relationships.

Archival Movement

Another essential aspect of the research was to re-enact *Let's Go Bowling* (1955) to camera, in order to explore an originating archival film containing active knowledgeable bodies[12]; where the actor or specialist is showing an audience how to move, play and as I now see it, perform. I was asking through my practice if watching can release the filmed action, teaching the body how to bowl, or in the case of the other films I was researching, play baseball or swim. I wanted to see if I was able to collapse the space between watching and doing, collapsing the distance between the originating film and the body, testing how I can move from a static engagement to an active one, that exists beyond the archive. I am also trying to reason this response in light of the originating films being accessed online, through the digital screen, enacted through a physical response and not, as I was concerned, lost or mired online. Harking back, I remembered how such films preceded the doing, in my case at summer school in the 1970s learning how to resuscitate someone before we started swimming lessons, demonstrated via a 16mm projector to a group of startled young swimmers.

A film demonstrating how to move, jump and be strong from the past was part of why I wanted to enunciate it, liberating the bodies and finding a new utility within its archival state. The irony of this methodology is not lost on me. I am using films showing the active body, to understand how I make the body active in or through an archive, but this also critiques how I am able to work with and through an archive as an artist; a new set of instructions. I want to understand the difference between seeing the archive, discerning the films I was investigating visually, and how this could become active and

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[12] By knowledgeable body I mean the body presented on film skilfully demonstrating how a viewer might accomplish aptitude in an activity.

engaged, useful watching again. My approach to watching became important as a progenitor to creating work. I wanted to find a common experience through using performance to unpack the digitally archived bodies. I was intent on creating an immediate response with *Let's Go Bowling*, an unadulterated moment of the performers meeting the originating 1955 artefact from the Prelinger Archive. The common attributes of the originating film and a contemporary examination for me is the body; a bridge able to present and transmit knowledge.

Although the space of the film studio, method of lighting and filming is constructed, I sought to create an uncluttered and unobtrusive space in my version of an archival scenario. This was to foreground the body of the performers, to give them an equivalent presence with the period voiceover describing the instruction from the originating film, but also to reflect on an accepted equivalence that the archival process creates. The disjointed nature of the online experience, and how an archive might operate, is compelling because of its suggested endless nature, its seeming lack of structure. The formalising of my response with *Let's Go Bowling* was to create an alternative 'archival moment' from a possible online one, where I was creating the space to be able to read aspects of the originating film, the bodily movements, in the self-styled reading room of the studio.

Performing the Learning

I find observing the active body compelling in how it challenges and demands the attention of a viewer. There is a sense of watching to learn when seeing someone repeat an action that you want to achieve. I wanted the performers to actively *watch* what was taking place in the bowling instruction, rather than passively *see* it. By engaging in a

retelling, they were able to potentially start making a type of sense of the actions and gestures captured in the originating film and replayed through their bodies, possibly learning how to bowl, or at least attempting to. Watching and responding became a way to physically engage with the archived films, where the body is the interlocutor between the archival material and a new audience. The outcome of this might be less about the details of the originating artefact, and possibly more about the contemporised translation of it by the performers bodies and what this might offer us in understanding it, while also appraising how we might access such digital artefacts.

Let's Go Bowling (1955) contained specialists in the form of representatives of the Bowling Association of America, demonstrating technique, skill and expertise. I wanted to use the skilful technique in the originating film as a basis to make new work. The conditions of the filming did not allow the performers to become experts or realise the 'role' of the characters presented in the originating film. This approach of wanting to capture the performers' tentative responses to the film in an immediate encounter was the directive given to Leah and Connor. The filming ended when they crossed over into more refined and seemingly knowing gestures, where their engagement with the footage became less precarious and more rehearsed. I wanted the expertise portrayed in the film to create a tension that manifests itself as an aspiration, a tension in wanting to be the skilful body by simply watching and in the case of Leah and Conor, encouraged to try and learn. Maintaining this unrehearsed tension, the performers enacted the aspiration for expertise through their hesitant movements.

I aspired to find a way to describe a post-digital condition, how archives are sited amongst online networks. The expertise, or archival knowledge, has already taken place,

74

dispersed when the artefacts were selected and placed online, and now left to be pieced together by the user, problematised by a networked taxonomy. The digital film's archival skin becomes thin, so in using the body to respond, be it tentatively, intuitively or instinctively, I am attempting to generate newly possible vital relationships. In this way, the performances to camera stand in for the original film without the need for the originating film to be present; it would seem almost arbitrary to my mind, in the way content is streamed and shared. Importantly this approach to a hesitant state has become part of my methodology in making work, part of my archival thinking in relation to the transformation from physical to digital artefact. The digital artefact is transformed through their bodies to create meaning in my version of *Let's Go Bowling*, without the originating purpose or meanings being directly translated, or a pressing need to do so.

Not Directing

Let's Go Bowling also operated as documentation of the performers responding to the historic film while simultaneously being an artwork that can be screened. The aesthetics of documentary film making, of which there are many, largely resonate with how I wanted the film to be shot and appear. In this case I did not want to make a film that operated with a particular narrative structure, where one scene moves onto another, as they would do regardless by the nature my editing. David Mamet in *On Directing Film* explains (1992, p.3):

> The movie … is much closer than the play to simple storytelling. If you listen to the way people tell stories, you will hear that cinematically. The jump from one thing to the next, and the story is moved along by the juxtaposition of images.

As discussed previously I utilised a technical methodology similar to that used by Yvonne Rainer in *Trio Film* (1968)*,* where the camera was static. Similarly, in *Heaven is a Place*

(2014), a short dance film exploring the LGBT community in Plymouth directed by Dr Kayla Parker, the filming is described as drawing upon 'the actualité style of early filmmakers such as the Lumière Brothers, which depicted ordinary people and everyday events' (Mock, Parker & Way, 2017, p. 198). This is explained further (2017, p. 198):

> The observational mode of filming created space on the screen for the dancer sequences; framed by the camera, the viewer can see the performers' bodies moving in relation to space.

As with *Trio Film* and *Heaven is a Place*, I am directing and capturing the unrehearsed performers without a narrative preamble. The editing of the film, kept in sync with the voiceover, is done to create a visual rhythm. I see almost every take as useful, in terms of its use in constructing and editing the resultant video. I do not reshoot, any edits or cuts are kept to a minimum and used to move the action of the bowling forward, fully inhabiting the created space of the frame, essentially unmediated as practically possible beyond the process of making the work.

In planning the filming and attempting an uncomplicated process, I was hoping to enable Leah and Conor in responding to the film. I was not asking for them to perform in a particular way, but rather to use an approach which Yvonne Rainer described in her work as being 'professionally detached', as I discussed in Chapter 2. As much as I was exhuming the archived experts in the originating film – the professional bowlers – I also wanted to unmake the compelling trappings of the gendered and historic[13] by foregrounding the movement and physical actions available to the performers, and their response to it, at least in viewing the final film. I wanted to question, through the performers, the film's authoritative message of how to bowl, played back through the

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[13] By gendered and historic I mean how the men and women were portrayed, dressed and interacted with each other that was stereotypical of the time, 1955, when *Let's Go Bowling* was made.

performers in the actions of the instruction, and for their initial liveness and videoing to become at least equal in relevance to the originating film. This included how the film might be read or misread, or taken out of context. This was not so much an attempt to boil down the components of the expert instruction and reconstitute them in a new work, but rather to critique the film and its "archivalness" through remaking it, as simply as possible; then asking, is it still useful and able to instruct the body, beyond it being a historically rich document of a particular cultural moment in North American history. Does its existence online help or hinder understandings of it?

In filming *Let's Go Bowling* in a single session with no rehearsals or breaks, it was a challenge to be both open yet focused enough as a director/maker to allow the consequences of how the performers realised their responses to shape and form the work. One risk in this approach was that through its productive progression to the conclusion of the filming, I did not know whether it could operate as a finished artwork. I recognise this approach to filming is haphazard, although still controlled by me within the space of a studio capturing the performances. Whatever happened I would have filmed something. I did not plan to rehearse because I wanted to capture Leah and Conor's first responses to the material. The pre-production planning meant setting up a number of conditions – the uncluttered space, lighting and no props or a considered costume beyond plain clothes as requested. The performers were not to be guided by the need to assume the role of the characters in the originating film, but rather by taking on the role of learners. I felt that props or being in period or authentic bowling costume would encourage investment in the roles in the originating film. This would be at odds with my approach to maintain a sense of integrity as an archive thinker and detachment from the originating film. I wanted to creatively have a sense of the documented

experiment, for the bodies of Leah and Conor to be foregrounded, simply appearing to perform. Richard Schechner clarifies this 'to perform' (2013, p. 208):

> All actors are performers, but not all performers actors. In theory, one can specify the difference between actors and performers. But in practice these differences are in the process of collapsing. Stage actors enact roles composed by others, repeat these roles on a regular basis before audiences who know that the actors are pretending to be who they enact. In spectator sports, the situation is complicated. Athletes are not pretending, but they are performing. The focus on accomplishing tasks specific to particular sports…at the same time as they display themselves publicly…the exercise of skills remains the core performance.

Although both the examples discussed by Schechner are of live performances, unlike the filmed performance in *Let's Go Bowling*, I wanted to draw out his notion of performance activity that is what it is, e.g. a bowler performing bowling. Conor and Leah's performances were just that, performing learning in this case, through the instructive film. This sense of performing to understand is also present in the performed learning. I hoped to discover how they accomplished the task, how the body can be part of my methodology in re-performing the historic instructive bowling film from the originating footage, creating a film of the process as an artwork, and how the moment of engagement can unpack some of the complexities around the relationship we have with available digital archives.

Archival Learning

When planning how I could realise a response to a video that instructed the viewer how to bowl, I wanted to realise a depiction of bowling as portrayed in the original video and expose its archival agency as a digital artefact. I wanted to do this in two stages: for the performers to enact and translate the instruction, and for this to be captured on video, to be viewed after the fact. This approach developed out of a discussion I had with both performers, describing the relationship I had with the instruction, my personal memory

of being taught how to bowl. This understanding framed the process. As there were no props, uniform or paraphernalia, I did not allow them to actually inhabit the role of the bowlers in the originating film. After we had finished, Leah and Conor reflected on the performance and its relationship to the process of filming. When trying to understand what the film had captured, Conor concluded that they were engaged in a process of learning, rather than thinking of the role of trainee bowler as one they had to inhabit. This was enough direction for them to follow the instruction, without tipping over into inhabiting and performing the roles presented to them in the originating film. This emphasised how an archive is held to account through the framework it is presented through, and particular approaches or protocols are at play when interacting with archival material. My response to *Let's Go Bowling* was shaped by my understanding its archival nature, and how it sits within a larger taxonomy, where learning how to perform also included learning how to perform accessing an archive.

In using video as a method to document or capture the tentative early stages of learning, there is a distinct separation from the agency of the performance as a live act; the video is an alternative layer of interpretation of the originating footage that contains a recording of a live performance, but also a video work in its own right. I found the performed learning a compelling aestheticisation of bodily learning, created through realising an interpretation of originating footage. The performers were a proxy for the originating video through their performance; a mirror, an echo or gateway back to it. The outcome was expressed by the process of both performers; the space of the body was a proxy for the bowling instruction. Their performance translated a remnant of the originating film, where the originating film, the artefact they were responding to, is no longer 'present' to a viewer. The film of the performances is an account of the

79

experience of this process, and in part at least, an archival equivalent, of the originating film.

I had come to realise that the original film becomes arbitrary beyond the filmed response to it by Leah and Conor, as through their re-enactment of it they have consumed it, less meeting the archive and more eating the archive. The new *Let's Go Bowling* sits at a nexus of being a document of an experience but also a film of bodily gesture, tentative action, hesitant and imperfect. On viewing, the irony of attempting to bowl by not bowling is clear, as is the potential humour this elicits in the repetitive futile movements of failed attempts at bowling. This would also suggest an adjustment to the notion of archive thinker: that any attempt at objective distance is constantly collapsing, that the more tacit notion of an archive is also at the behest of how it is imagined, utilised and translated. This might suggest an archive can be all things at once as understood or reasoned by the user, by me as an artist, which again cannot be entirely reasoned, only experienced. An archive is raw material to digest, masticate and regurgitate, and it's through this that I want to make sense of an archive, so that it ostensibly becomes my archive.

A question then is how am I able to continue to facilitate the point where tacit knowledge meets instruction, while allowing the tentative unbinding, as took place with *Let's Go Bowling*, to be further facilitated? It is not a problem that the outcome of this means the performance is unusable to re-instruct a viewer in how to bowl, it is an outcome of the larger process of creatively responding to the archival artefact. The journey from the archive and how I have set about capturing this experience has been a creative and productive route of attempting how to bowl. My staging of earnest failure

was surprisingly compelling as a work, but also operated as an interpretation and critique of how I can respond to online and archivally remote content.

Failure to Bowl

It was accepted that the performers could not truly replicate the instruction in a way that could be described as useful in learning how to bowl convincingly. They had no bowling ball to swing; no bowling shoes to slide, no bowling alley to aim down and no pins to knock over. Their movements were tentative as they were watching, learning and performing. Their actions were shaped through the proposition of responding to the instruction. What was initially planned as a process of faltering re-enactment became a process of speculative failure, as well as a form of critique of the process. In creating the work there manifested a failure, that of being unable to truly learn a skill, for the performers or viewers of the video. This was a revelation, as I did not initially admit to myself that this was my goal, to make 'non-bowling' enactments, which was not problematic as a work of art, and indeed gave rise to the humour and irony redolent in the video performances. The not bowling became a self-contained form generated by the performers engaging with the artefact, the originating film.

My creative strategy was to set up a number of circumstances for the performances and let this develop. Leah and Conor were asked to purposefully attempt a re-enactment. I did not set out to use failure as a device or catalyst in generating responses, but it became increasingly relevant as a form of response to the originating footage. I did not give them a bowling ball, so the re-enactment was frustrated from the offset. Although it was not my goal to make a perfect copy of the originating film, the process alleviated an anxiety I had about treating the footage as precious, as a final complete version of

itself, and was counterpointed by the omnipresent narrator from the originating film. The film felt agreeably discursive. I recognise the potential of these 'failures' to create new meanings within the performances. Although my initial approach was a re-enactment, this quickly became an enactment of gestures, more semaphore than bowling. Importantly, I have come to realise through this that part of my creative methodology is to allow for unsuspected results, and deal with the consequences accordingly. I have now come to terms with the fact that I had set up the potential for mis-translation and mis-understandings in the responses to *Let's Go Bowling*. I now see this as part of the work's richness, it's humour and generative meanings. Again, I accept this is also as a form of account of utilising archival where there is an un-knowing that takes place when meeting the archive, haphazard understandings that take place in the absence of guidance and context from the archivists and librarians. I might not have acknowledged this in the early stages of this project, but it is what I want to continue to develop as a way to work through the complicated relationships I have with online archival material, and how I find a way to reason my response to it in a creative practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reflected on *Let's Go Bowling*, my creative response to a same title 1955 video clip from an online archive. What became clear through the process of developing the work is that I sought to experiment with the authority of archival material, and how this was a foil for me to creatively respond. Some of this authority is a given, by the fact that it has been deemed worthy of accession into the Prelinger Archive. I attempted to do this through a deconstruction of bowling techniques as a process of performing. Thinking through my choice of films from the wealth that is available through the Prelinger portal, I selected what I considered a classic US sport,

ten pin bowling, to attempt to unpack and critique the archive. The choice of the film was also made as I wanted to explore how I remembered being taught how to bowl, and this subjective anchoring I recognise as part of my methodology in developing work with an archive.

I wrestled with defining what constitutes the expertise in the originating film and how this could be transferred in making a response in my version. Although this was initially to discover and creatively liberate the expertise held in the film, it became more about possible individual expression and resistance to the actual instruction itself. From the outset of this project, I set myself the task of testing if a film could teach a viewer how to bowl, and how the archive could be performed. Through the outcomes of this stage of the project I am still invested in discovering how I manage the possibly utility found through the body when accessing an archive, but I discovered I was also exploring and testing my own set of instructions on how to access an archive as an artist. I see *Let's Go Bowling* in light of this discovery.

My version of *Let's Go Bowling* was not a purposeful attempt to usurp the originating film. My tactic was to utilise re-enactment strategies as a method to unbind what ostensibly are fixed records, and to explore how instruction in historic film can then become animated. My archive thinking, as described earlier, is redolent here, where the archives and its components are creative material, but also a framework to materially think through. For me the relationship between the performances and the film is redolent of the relationship the artefact has with the archive; a form of sense making through understanding the taxonomy of the artefact and its relationship with the archive. I appreciate this thinking is flawed, as it would suggest the outcome of making

work from archival sources then has a place in the archive itself alongside its 'parent'. This is easier thought of as another aspect of archive thinking. Key outcomes include how the voiceover from the originating film was an important anchor for the performers, but also how a remnant from the originating film persisted, being an element of the relationship between the performer, the artefact and myself and possibly an irritant or feedback loop countering and challenging its relevance. Moving forward, I want to continue to explore the perceived lack of relationship I have with an archive's online content, and how this will be different if I am able to spend time with a physical archive. The impulsive impetus is to find utility in performance strategies that might be different if that active body is mine moving through a physical archive. My response to an archival film's post digital condition, now read through a ubiquitous screen, is a coming to terms with how the originating film *Let's Go Bowling* has moved from a social public state, to a different status in the archive. Now held digitally, along a decreasing bandwidth squeezing bodies onto smaller and smaller screens, I can't help but want to attempt a re-socialising of it, invigorating new bodies in light of the originating ones. This progress is also parallel to the creative decision to continue to remove and reduce the possible interference of an accurate copied re-enactment of the source material, making clear the relationship, but also the dissonance made possible by the relationships with the originating films I will continue to investigate.

Figure 11 Motion Picture Reading Room, Library of Congress.

This chapter reflects on a four-month research placement at the Library of Congress (LoC), Washington DC, USA. This was based within the Motion Picture Reading Room, deep within the building's labyrinthian structure, with nothing but the door to indicate what lies beyond, as shown in Figure 11. I describe how I located myself within and through the film collections, meditating on how my subjectivity met a particular archive, moving as well as being an active archive thinker. This is through being present in a physical archive, rather than a conceptualising of it, as I have done up to this point. This is contextualised through what archivist Jamie A. Lee describes as 'situated in and out of the personal and the formal, the body and the head, the gut and heart' (2016, p. 35). I wanted to be attenuated to the experience of being in the archive, as Lee describes,

being alert to the affect on how I creatively operate within it. I return to Hal Foster's 'archival impulse' (2004), Anne McNally and Sue Breakell's discussion of an archival objectivity and Giovanna Fossati's meditation on the status of film when it changes from analogue to digital. This chapter also thinks through the conversations I had with LoC Motion Picture Librarian, Josie Walters-Johnson, where we discussed how films are processed and handled once they enter the LoC. I investigate how my archive thinking inhabits, negotiates and functions and how this bodily understanding will inform and develop my practice research. I continue to focus on what I have previously described as useful films, developed out of a culture in the early 20th century in the US, of seeing the potential of cinema 'as a pedagogical strategy for moulding conduct' (Grieveson, 2012, p. 111). As much as I am seeking films about instructing the active body, I am also beginning to understand how this is also a search into how I am able to bodily exist in the archive; but now instructed by the librarians, protocols, stacks and ordered materials.

Library of Congress

I identified at an early stage of this research project a need to spend time within a moving image archive. I wanted to immerse myself amongst its workings to reflect on Jacque Derrida's theorised suppositions of an archive's self-structuring histories, coming face to face with what he describes as 'administrators' who control access to its histories (Baron, p. 3, 2014) as I experience a physical archive. I wanted to come to an understanding of how I personally negotiate an archive as an artist researcher and its effects on how I work with specific artefacts, in this case moving image. I needed to be present in an archive to contemplate Derrida's theorising in *Archive Fever* of how 'archivisation produces as much as it records the event' through the administrators,

archivists and librarians (Derrida, 1998 p. 17). This was to help map the experience of the archive and its social interactions, in order to gain an understanding and sense of the space and place of an archive; and through understand its performative potential. In researching and then meeting the films, I began to understand how they also existed as objects in the stacks, part of a network, and how in turn my interaction gave rise to a performative 'structure'. The relationships between myself, the archivist and the collections are drawn through Derrida's description of an authorative schematic, but also possible material I could creatively extrapolate. This intense experience with the analogue films was also driven by my desire to find a sense of a source, the physical originals, to best illicit a different and more authentic archival encounter than I had previously found when working with online archives.

Seeking this "authenticity" was a creative strategy of attempting to form a relationship with the films, drawing upon my interactions with the collections at the LoC, including the e-mail communications with librarians and face to face interactions with the collection specialist. This is problematised as discussed in the introduction on p. 15, with Fossati describing a need to maintain a film's authenticity as it becomes transformed from original to digital form. As discussed in Chapter 1, p. 37, Arns questions the authenticity of histories that are now being delivered to us at all times and across multiple digital platforms, seemingly undermining their veracity. My understandings of archival authenticity are realised through my encounters in an archive and my comprehension of archival protocols and procedures. This included the practical origins of the films but also the dialogues and shared anecdotes with me as interlocuter and the archive's administrators – the whole experience of an archival encounter. This is not a naïve position, where I am at the mercy of everything I encountered while being

receptive or engaged in the creative research, but rather part of my creative methodology. I am also conscious of Franco Berardi's explanation in *Trap of Identity and Delusion of Truth* (2017), where the 'concept of authenticity refers to a pre-mediated experience, but the pre-mediated does not exist and has never existed. It is a delusion of purity' (2017, p. 136). I deliberate this in light of how we are caught in a constant stream of images, unable to fully deconstruct what is more a mediated concept than fact, yet where an archival structure offers some relief from this. The paradox of directly experiencing the indirect experience of mediated artefacts is through the understandings I have via my archive thinking; I cannot imagine what might constitute an un-mediated archive. An archive is essentially a mediated and maintained collection of nominated historic and or important artefacts. Its cohesion as an archive is sustained in the practices that maintain it. Recognising that these procedures, the protocols and rituals that make an archive an archive, are a construct, is a starting point for me to begin to intersect and find my way through the LoC.

Privileging the experience of encountering physical archives counters or augments Berardi's description of an authenticity based on 'pre-mediated experience'. I am attentive to how it affects me as an artist, how it resonates and becomes part of my experience though my archive thinking. I speculatively see this as a subjective provenance, centred on my experience of the artefacts, an archive revealing itself through my interaction with it. My strategy of working within the LoC collections was to firstly comprehend how I practically found the particular artefacts I was interested in. I was attentive to what inspired me, how the films I found sat within my research enquiry and how I might creatively respond to the moving image artefacts themselves. I treated it as a whole process; negotiating with the archivist, librarians, the space of the

collections, watching the films as part of the creative research. This exploration was part of how I constructed my understanding of the physical archive and how I might work with it. This exploration suggested a course to begin to creatively reconfigure these materials in realising new work. This authenticity was also constructed through the relationships with the librarians, the experience of being present in the reading rooms and dealing with the original films themselves. This enabled me to come to terms with Berardi's troubling notion of finding authenticity, instead relying on direct experience itself. I am similarly comprehending that the authenticity that I am seeking is in part drawn through me, by my desires. Jamie A. Lee, in discussing these possible desirable encounters, draws upon Sara Ahmed's work (2016, p. 37) and notes 'we are not only directed towards objects, but those objects also take us in a certain direction' (2006, p. 545). Although I did not intentionally set out to seek out 'queer/ed' archives[14], I do acknowledge the 'distinct knowing of self' that takes place, where the archive yields to me and I to it (Lee, 2016, p. 37). This path becomes self-perpetuating to a degree, as I seek one body after another when wanting to meet the archived films.

I was directed to the Macdonald Collection through correspondence with the Motion Picture Librarian Josie Walters-Johnson. In our early correspondence I described the type of films I was looking for, films that contained visual instructions on leisure pursuits or sports, in particular how to swim or play baseball. This was in part to develop how I responded to *Let's Go Bowling* (1955), a film that was sourced online through the Prelinger Archive as discussed in the previous chapter. What would be different if I met the films I was seeking? A compelling fact of the Macdonald Collection at the time of

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[14] Lee describes using the forward slash to collapse the distinction between past and present, where the queer/ed is an active idea, 'to queer', to highlight difference, a difference drawn out of recognition, a live embodied act.

my enquiries was its uncategorised nature. It had not been fully accessioned into the LoC. As this collection had not been fully archived, searching was done via a Microsoft Word document from the original cataloguer, with the collection held in the LoC storage facility. I would have to travel to Washington DC to access it. This was exciting to contemplate, a form of Foster's 'archive impulse', that through a creative practice, I might be able to somehow realise and manifest the collections potential, before the fact of meeting the archive. As Foster states (2004, p.22):

> Perhaps the paranoid dimension of archival art is the other side of its utopian ambition – its desire to turn belatedness into becomingness, to recoup failed visions in art, literature, philosophy, and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no place of a utopia.

Foster's artists celebrate the unique historical energy that is found in an archive that can be released, but also the archive's non-destructive mutability, a sand pit of sorts. Foster describes artist Sam Durant's practice in this light as 'the framing of a historic period as a discursive episteme' and further 'Durant presents his archival materials as active, even unstable - open to eruptive returns and entropic collapses, stylistic repackagings and critical revisions' (2004, p.17). There is an energy being sought by Durant that Foster is describing, the impulse to reframe the relationship an archive might have with a history, and how this slips and slides under a level of artistic duress. This 'paranoid' trait as described by Foster is evident through bringing a new focus to an archive, in an attempt to stabilise what might be seen as a lack, erroneous narratives or historic gaps. I was drawn to see what the Macdonald Collection might hold, and to understand why this collection would warrant being accessioned into the LoC. I was inspired by the educational nature of the films in the collection to inform and convince. I imagined that through my investigation and creative response, they could be brought back into

Foster's 'becomingness', driven to unearthing hidden or speculative histories, motivated in part by what he describes as altruistic motivations to make an archive, its history and the contained bodies, relevant. I do recognise the paranoid dimension that Foster voices in my own work, where he describes artist's working with archives that 'aim to disturb the symbolic order at large – or to an important change in its workings whereby the symbolic order no longer operates though apparent totalities' (2004, p. 21). I have not lost faith in the archive to maintain order, but question through my work how relevant this order is, considering how we digitally access and subjectively appraise the accounts found in an archive of our own lived histories.

Algorithm Free Catalogue

To be able to spend time in an analogue archive, I needed perseverance, inventiveness and a willingness to be guided by the librarians. It was almost impossible to freely rove this archive, due to the materiality and practicality of film, and it needing to be stored off site in more controlled conditions. Working with the Librarians in the Motion Picture Reading Room was the start of my enquiry, being very clear as to what I was looking for to see if the library holdings could yield these. I wanted to find my own way into and through the collections, where an undirected dérive could not only familiarise myself with the place, but also be a creative strategy to become more contemplative. Yet what was immediately apparent was that I had to negotiate my searches through the Librarians. When speaking to Josie Walters-Johnson, one of the Motion Picture Reading Room Librarians, she described the challenging balance of protecting the films and allowing them to be seen (2017, Appendix H):

> We definitely want to be able to provide access to the materials that we have. That is why we are here. But then this is where you are going to bump into the fact that we are a library and also an archive. I think inherently the trajectories

are slightly different. They can work together but sometimes there can be hiccups. As a Librarian I want to be able to provide easy access to anything we can possibly provide access to, so barring issues of copyright and donor restrictions, which is fine. But sometimes you cannot provide access to this particular reel because "x, y & z" needs to be taken into consideration; is there is damage, perforations need to be fixed and things like that. So, I think there is always that kind of give and take on either side, trying to find the right balance for the material itself and for the person trying to access that material, and that can be challenging.

Walters- Johnson is describing some of the rules and protocols sustaining an archive, and it's this sense of appropriate and legal behaviour that also becomes part of the film's archival authenticity, granted by the same rules that sustains its place in the LoC. This became part of how I understood the films, part of their archival existence.

The nature of the Librarian's role in the reading room was multifaceted. They are keepers of collections, the administrators that enable usage but also shape the experience of the archive itself. They in many senses perform the archive into existence. Anne McNally describes the process of the archivist/cataloguer as ideally about ordering, applying a systematic approach when specifically dealing with a new collection (2013, p. 106):

It's your duty as a cataloguer to record any information you might have gained about the archive during the cataloguing process, thus helping researchers to find any archives that might be relevant to them. So you find yourself walking a fine line and using lots of words like 'probably', 'possibly' and 'appears to be'. It's these tentative expressions that mark out archival cataloguing from Library classification should remind you that there's a human involved in the process.

I understand the cataloguer McNally describing performing a role, as cataloguer and archivist, inhabiting the appropriate methodologies to make subjective yet rational decisions on what is kept, highlight or discarded. In their role as caretakers, the Librarians at the LoC were also performing their roles. I was very aware that I had to work with and through the staff in the reading rooms to access the films I wanted to see.

This was a live interaction, nuanced and personable, where I had to "mesh" with their approach, as a dutiful researcher. The relationship we developed, how we both performed our roles, helped to shape my experience of the Motion Picture Reading Room.

Figure 12 Motion Picture Reading Room, Library of Congress.

Once directed by the Librarians as to which collection was best focus on, the next step in finding a film was via the collection's catalogue, held locally within the reading room itself. Although there are a number of films listed and searchable through the online

portal of the LoC, it is by no means extensive or inclusive of the larger holdings. This necessitated a physical searching for films via a process of indexical discovery. The majority of the moving picture catalogue exists primarily as a card index, with other collections either catalogued in a Microsoft Word document or locally placed databases that can only be accessed via one terminal in the reading room itself. You have to be present to access the library catalogue (pictured in Figure 12). This presented an opportunity for unexpected reverie. I would hesitate to describe a collection reading room as a place for this to take place, as I was looking through complex and layered taxonomical systems, all the while under the watchful eye of the collections Librarians. Any possible reverie was tempered by the need to be thorough, entailing a systematic approach to enable the best results from my searching. The index cards had alterations, crossings out and corrections, or were surprisingly new and pristine. The majority of the cards appeared to have been handled a number of times, with small creases or marks from previous searches. Nevertheless, I had a simultaneous sense of being an explorer at the beginning of a journey, where the unknown and undiscovered is energetic, part of Foster's impulse, while being aware of traversing the meticulous network of cataloguing and indexing that was present in the card indexing and held to account by the Librarians.

It is a slow process compared to how the majority of online searching can now be done, where the digital process makes associations across a larger dynamic range, at speed and without a physical implication, as your searches can be done if you have an internet connection. Although searching digitally feels highly convenient, I can't help but be sceptical that I would get a complete response from online searching. Unlike online searching, the films in a collection are either available or not, offering at least a sense of

an exhaustive search. It is difficult to know the nature or understand the algorithmic parameters by which suggestions and alternative choices are made for me, when I don't know how this is done it does not feel complete. This is not the case with the moving image archive – as you need to be present in the library to search specifically or free associate across the collection, and, algorithm aside, you need to use your own search criteria and processes, guided by the omnipresent librarians, to find the films you think you wish to see. To be thorough, you need to take a rationalised approach to the process of searching through a document/index/catalogue.

To begin, I continued as I had done with the Prelinger Archive, to seek out films that had instruction contained within them. The initial search term I used was swimming. Focusing within the MacDonald collection via the Microsoft Word document, I had to rely on the original cataloguer's tenacity to have been specific enough in their descriptions for me to find films that I wanted to see and the algorithmic search function to find the key words of my search. Even with the help of the software's algorithm, the process was drawn-out and felt outmoded to me, however it yielded unexpected finds either side of the highlighted terms. My eyes would catch a word or description from an adjacent film description in the listing, serendipitous discoveries that would not have been found otherwise. I can't help but think that system had sprung up between myself and the original collection cataloguer or archivist, where I am intersecting the catalogue and rendering my searches based on the descriptions that I find, enacting an exchange that felt more reciprocal than algorithmic. Governed by a series of rules and protocols, I made my choices accordingly, through understandings of the systems that the archivist had enacted and my place in accessing and utilising it, but applying my increasingly recognised 'queer/ed' approach to my searching. Although I can never meet the original

cataloguer of the Macdonald collection, I have a sense of them, through the language and choices they made when cataloguing the collection, what to include or highlight, deny or ignore. I cannot help but respond to this, making my own assumptions and characterisations of the original cataloguer's intent.

Searching the literal descriptions of each film from the Macdonald Collection revealed scene or shot lists that could be described as subjective accounts. As evidenced below, there is an element of observational viewing, with some passages of the descriptions categorised by terms in brackets such as 'juvenile delinquency', 'racist' or 'animal rights'. I rationalised the logic of pinpointing salient or useful particulars of the text for future researchers, although I would hope that a researcher might be able to contextualise the meanings without a big arrow – 'racism here', being needed. On finding a catalogue entry through using my key terms, I began to be inclined to read the catalogue text as poetic form. In some ways this could be described as an artistic manifesting of my archive thinking. The descriptions were lyrical and narrative driven, reflecting the films they described. To illustrate this, I have included one such catalogue entry below in Figure 13. I altered the text by simply creating a new line on each hyphenation or comma, otherwise it is unchanged.

HOME MOVIES 423: NICE KODACHROME COLOR (1964; SILENT)

family takes trip to South America and the Caribbean Islands;

Brazil-Rio De Janeiro, Belem, Surinam River, Venezuela-Caracas, Curacao Willemstad, Bonaire, Trinidad-Port of Spain,

Grenada, Martinique-St. John, Puerto Rico—

good shots of tourists playing beach volleyball,

children playing on the sand and water,

women in bathing suits,

women basking in the sun,

crowd at beach-–shots of tourists at resort;

playing in swimming pool,

diving into pool, basking in the sun, etc.—

shots inside soccer stadium during a game—

shot of car racetrack-–shots of city;

French monuments,

governmental buildings,

lavish gardens,

lush green forests w/ palm trees,

man next to waterfall—

men go fishing—

wild hog in small village—

men collect eggs laid by flamingos (animal rights)—

flamingos on shore—

boats and ships arriving to ports on harbor—

bustling city traffic and highways—

man collecting ocean shells and rocks—

shot of sign and facility, "Trinidad Hilton"—

shot of sign,

"Welcome to Grenada",

shot of sign,

"San Felipe Del Morro"—

POV shots from small canoe going down rough stream—

hotel worker cutting hotel grass on a slanted hill by attaching rope to lawnmower and pulling it back and forth

T-5A

Figure 13 Home Movies 423, Macdonald Collection, Library of Congress

I did not expect to be so inspired by the catalogue texts. During the searching, this was

sometimes the most interesting part of the research, taking place before watching the

specific film. The textual descriptions inhabited my imagination, but also concretely

appeared as scripts or scores of the films, and sometimes would be more interesting than the actual film that it referred to.

The poetic nature of the film's written description was compelling. The catalogue entry was evocative; it held an account of the film's shot description that became vital to me in terms of how I considered the film in light of the research. This energised my approach within the Moving Picture Library and my archival thinking. The films do not simply exist in the stacks to be discovered, they exist within a network, selected and placed. Sue Breakell in Tate Papers No. 9 *Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive* states (2008):

> Although no activity is objective or free of bias, a core principle of archival practice is to seek to be as objective as possible in what might be called the 'performance' archivists enact on the archive. This includes describing material neutrally, documenting what they do to the archive, and intervening as little as possible if an original order is discernible in the papers.

Breakell's suggestion of the performance archivists enact on an archive is shaped through an understanding of neutrality, an approach to enforce the protocols of an archive through a performed objectivity. I am mindful that in the Macdonald Collection this was not necessarily the case, that objectivity was not fixed, as the descriptions of the catalogue texts hint at a subjective voice (e.g. animal rights), suggesting a corporeal presence watching and engaged in listing the scenes. This sense of an archival objectivity could then be described as governed by an agreed protocol that enacts an archival structure, a performative script, rules that will govern behaviour. The protocols of the cataloguer, the objective performance of the Macdonald archivist, like the archival material itself, is of its time and place, different and unique. The catalogue entry is no less relevant and still continues to reinforce its place in the archive. I am intrigued by the

differences I find between the different cataloguers, the characters of the people who manifest the Macdonald archive and how their idiosyncratic approach suggests the same is possible in my creative interpretation of these original archival sources.

Alan Sekula, when describing photographic archives in *The Body and the Archive*, describes objectivity in less passive terms, as a self-perpetuating active aspect; 'We can speak then of generalized, inclusive *archive*, a *shadow archive* that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning individuals within that terrain' (1986, p. 10). Sekula's shadow archive, where bodies are placed next to each other 'whose semantic interdependence is normally obscured by the "coherence" and "mutual exclusivity" of the social groups registered within each' (1986, p.10), constructs objectivity through its connective parts, enforcing meaning through being seemingly complete. The shadow archive Sekula deliberates on is a homogenising that takes place when examining an archives' relations, a shadow that is not truth but a particular set of meanings created by the associated parts of the whole, the archival component by their proximity generating a form of a truth, Sekula's shadow. Recognising that archives perpetuate or suggest a seamless veracity means that we need to accept the inverse of this, that archives are never complete, never fully ambivalent. This begs a question around what is not present or becomes omitted when categorisation and placement are, as Breakell notes, done neutrally. The fine line McNally discusses earlier on p. 92, describing the options 'probably', 'possibly' and 'appears to be' (2013, p. 106), reminds us that archives are not static, even as they are being generated, and will always need to yield and give way to new contexts, meaning and relevancies. There will always be a need to question how an archive materialises, how it is consolidated, or made less tenable, by the possible

subjective processes. These ideas around an archive's mutability feed into my archive thinking.

Film as Film

What became clear to me as I spent more time in the Moving Picture Reading Room was that I had to come to terms with the films' physical implication, their raw state. This understanding of how films' archival nature is not fixed, but in slow deterioration, its atrophy as an unstable medium reverberated through me. Film was not made to last, it is a material of immediacy and light, to be transported and shown quickly and efficiently. Long term storage in an archive did not feature in its design. Acetate film particularly suffers from "vinegar syndrome", where the acetate base breaks down releasing acetic acid, and the film suffers from shrinkage and becomes less flexible, more brittle. This brings into stark contrast film as an object having consequences; it has literal weight, physical limitations and its own particular characteristics requiring specialist equipment and handling. Revisiting Fossati, in his chapter on *Theorizing Archival Film*, he puts these states into an archival perspective (2009, p. 105):

> Restorations of archival films are not original film artefacts shown for the first time to an audience, but, conversely, artefacts may have been historicized [sic] both on a material level (e.g. the film has been damaged by projection and chemical instability is causing decay) and on a conceptual level (e.g. the film is a product of its own time as the people who restore, study, and watch it).

I recognise within the films the hands of the archivist as well as its material-ness, and how this historicises the films I am accessing. Yet there was a frisson in wanting to view historic films with the imagined potential damage this brings, the vinegary smell that regularly permeated the Motion Picture Reading Room. Knowing this decay is at hand, I was still compelled to want to physically meet and immerse myself in the films

themselves. I wanted to find a place between the archival process, accessing and reviewing, and the material impact of the films themselves as an archival thinker.

Calling Forth the Film

Once a film is selected, the task of retrieving the film involves a very physical process; the film travels from an offsite facility some 80 miles away from the LoC, in Culpeper Virginia, and can take up to 3 weeks to arrive before being ready for viewing. The selected film will have to pass through a series of procedures before I am able to view it. Firstly, the film's location is verified, and if missing found or at least reported to be missing. Because the item has been requested, it is condition checked and any repairs needed are actioned. This includes measuring for shrinkage which seems to be the most common problem, making viewing the films complicated due to how film is pulled through a Steenbeck[15] by the perforations on the film itself. When the film arrives, I am made aware of its fragility, as each can of film has shrinkage percentage attached to it, so intensifying the experience of watching the film. Counterintuitively I was made aware by the Reading Room technician that these processes actually lengthen the life of the film, through confirming its location, condition, and repairing or mitigating any damage or decay before being placed back into long term storage. Accessing a film from a collection means the items are brought out of storage and granted an extended life, even at the cost of being used.

Any thoughts of the poetic that I might have had when reading the catalogue entries, or contemplating the films, were immediately challenged on meeting them. The films can

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[15] This is the manufacturing name for a film editing table, once ubiquitous in its use for editing analogue 16 & 35MM film, and still in use today as seen on p.107

only be watched via a Steenbeck, and not handled by the researcher. It is threaded and set up by the specialist librarian. You are then left in charge of running the film through the editing table of the Steenbeck. The film's specific physicality resonates as it is fed through the table and projected onto a ground glass screen. The degradation, be it the shrinkage or colour fading, creates unique characteristics for each film developing idiosyncrasy; each film will have its own rhythm and cadence as its passes along and through the viewer. Sitting close to the Steenbeck, the mechanics face you. Your arm will be resting on the bed of the machine itself, with your hand in a control mechanism that forwards, pauses or reverses the film. This was all the control I had. The sound the film makes as it travels through the machine is very immediate due to the nature of viewing the film. Listening to the film's sound track through headphones somewhat diminishes this, but I am still very aware of the film's clatter as it passes through the machine, the noise it makes as it is viewed and brought to life, the whine and catch as you start and stop the film.

At this point you are looking at the flickering image on the Steenbeck's small ground glass screen directly in front of you. Everything else has become secondary. You are left alone, able to watch the film at your own speed. Returning to Lee, she describes 'To understand such a material and physical *thingness* of the archives requires also engaging considerations of bodily experience in and out of the archives as part of knowledge production' (Sobchack 2004, p.7; Ahmed 2006, p.551 cited in Lee 2016, p. 39). I am able to have an intense relationship with the film, found originally through its text-based description, now across the ground glass screen of the Steenbeck. Where I had the title and a cataloguer's evocative description, I am now faced with voices and images of people and places, their moving, active bodies. As Lee suggests, my bodily presence, my

desires and biases, feelings and emotions, are part of how I make sense of what I am watching. Subjective critical and archival thinking is intermingled with an intense visual experience, see-sawing between watching, pausing and making notes and then looking again in a continuous cycle[16]. The descriptive text deployed in the catalogue entries would seem to come to life, as shown from a freeze frame from *Swim & Live* (1940) in figure 14, but as was the case, watching was an entirely different experience from the internal contemplation of the written records.
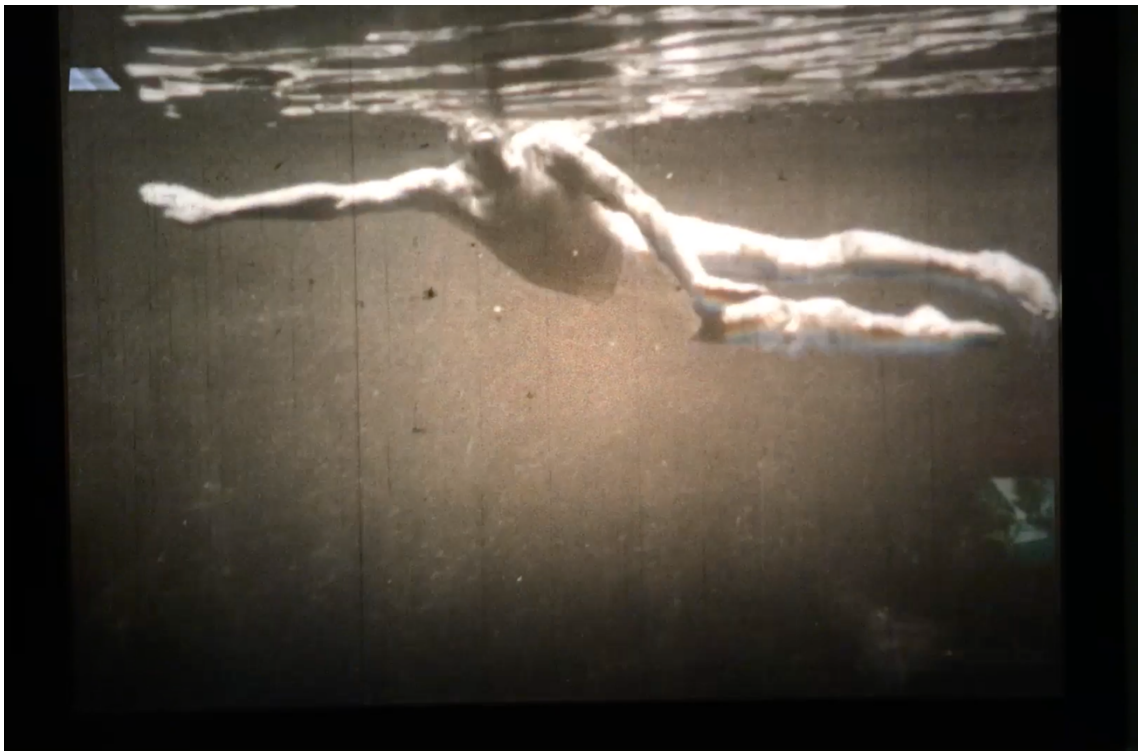
Figure 14 *Swim & Live,* 1940, still.

Watching or Looking

I would describe my critical watching as a type visual enquiry – where I am actively thinking, but also responding emotively, tempered by my archive thinking. I also see this

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[16] To be clear I understand looking as attentive searching, an initial phase that would lead to watching over a period time. Seeing is then momentarily, an event or moment, e.g. directing one's eyes to see something, that you are intentionally looking for, that when found, you then actively watch for a period of focused time.

taking place when I am looking. I understand the catalogue of the Macdonald Collection

as having an intrinsic relationship with the films I am seeking. This comes about through

looking at and through the catalogue to get to the selected films. Discussing the idea of

archival fragments, historical presence and visual excess, Jamie Baron sets out that

(2014, pp. 110-111):

> Written documents do not have the same indexical relationship to the historical
> world as do photographic, filmic or other audiovisual media, in which issues of
> excess are even more pronounced. Given their unruly excess, audiovisual media
> often demonstrate (whether intentionally or not) the excess, ambiguity, and
> disruptive "real".

I acknowledge a difference between the written document and the films they are

directing me to. Yet I comprehend an indexical relationship for me between the

Macdonald catalogue and the films, that might not be as ambiguous or disruptive as

Baron describes 'audiovisual' media as being, but rather it suggests to me an excess of

descriptive terms and narratives hinting at the real. This discovery came about as part

of the process of looking for the films that led to the watching of them. I do not consider

one state being more vital than the other, e.g. looking versus watching. They are

different states in a practice of accessing archival records and artefacts.

This is not to say that critically looking cannot also be a highly creative process, inspiring

but possibly fleeting. I want to make the distinction between the two aspects of my

research process when I was accessing the library's catalogues. One aspect was a

structured 'looking for', methodical to a degree, when searching the catalogues. The

second aspect on retrieving the films was a process of actively watching, critical

interpreting and being inspired by the archival material. Both of these aspects were

attendant on each other, the looking for the artefact in the archive and an experience

of watching it. Looking develops into an absorbed watching of the visually rich film.

These are distinctly different modes or states of encounter in accessing archival artefacts. I also see them as intimately joined, where the watching can only come about through the looking, where the document leading to the 'audiovisual' excess can come about.

I cannot deny what Baron describes as the excess of the films I am encountering that demand them to be watched and seen in light of the real world. The nature of the films is that they hold many locations and bodies. They do exceed the viewing screen of the Steenbeck, taking the viewer beyond the place they are inhabiting. I have had to come to terms with this richness in how I proceed to think through them creatively, while managing their excessive and unruly nature, and not being entirely lost in the evocative imagery flashing before me. I understand this is as part of why I find some of the films so compelling. I want to find a balance between these states; looking as a structed approach that leads to a contemplative and active watching, inspired while deliberating the film through my archive thinking.

Although, as I have described, watching is a visceral experience, I do not want to disregard the films physical materiality. The colours, if not black and white, are invariably faded red through the aging of the film, flashing through the countdown at the start of the film. There is no avoiding the drama of the motion of the film through the mechanism of the Steenbeck, the clatter of its mechanisms. You are experiencing the film without any theatrical mediation, as an editor or technician might see it. At this point, the film is very present, resolutely an object and still an artefact of the archive. Creatively I see this as encouraging a mode of deconstructing. This archive thinking has led me to treat the breaking up of scenes, or lifting aspects of the film from the whole,

as unproblematic. Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever* stresses the role of the individual in re-reading and ascribing understanding to the archive because 'we only have an impression, an insistent impression through the unstable feeling of a shifting figure, of a schema, or of an infinite or indefinite process' (1996, p.29). Like the ever-collapsing edges of Jorge Luis Borges's library in *The Library of Babel* (2000)*,* the limits of the archive are hard to grasp, the very edges always out of reach.

I am attentive to the potential of a film to inspire me while moving in and out of looking and then watching, able to notate and contemplate what I am watching. Through my subjective gaze I am drawn to what I recognise or know. This is not a perfect process, as thinking while trying to watch slows the whole process down. I stop and start the films when certain frames or scenes compel me to do so, taking notes and then continuing on. This halting of the flow of the film is traumatic, mechanically and visually bringing the Steenbeck and the film to a halt, simultaneously creating a mid-motion freeze frame. There is a change from watching to looking, where I pause and slowly rewind the film back and look at the section of the film intently, sometimes frame by frame, studying, notating and capturing freeze frames for use later. This frame then begins to operate as a single image that sits outside of the continuous flow of images that make up the film, yet never apart from it, being just after and just before the next frame. But as a possessive act I am producing a still, a remnant from the film that is highly selected, and therefore a highly charged image that is constantly referring back to the film it is taken from. This is something I am interested in exploring further, a fragment that is still part of the larger whole. I don't believe this has a detrimental impact on my experience of the films. As reflected on by Fossati, film viewed by different methods or circumstances does not create an 'ontological' problem if film is seen as in transition (2009, p.133). I

am watching material from an archive, regardless of how best to experience it, it has come from a shelf, to a viewing room in a reading room library. I am seeing it at a very close distance, experiencing the films with my body as much as watching it, sat at the Steenbeck (as shown in Figure 15).

Figure 15. Steenbeck, Motion Picture Reading Room, Library of Congress.

It is almost impossible to think though the circumstances the films were originally presented in, possibly venues such as 'lodges, women's organizations, 4-Clubs, scouting groups, Garage Branches' (Prelinger, 2006, p. ix). The conditions I am engaging these films through have an impact on how I understand the film, how I think about it and eventually generate a creative response to it. However I am attendant on their original use, presented in a social space. The archive is its new context, and I find it complex to understand it out of the place it now resides. This is not to say I cannot attempt to imagine an equivalent public arena for my response to them, for example in a gallery or

lecture presentation, but I want to come to terms with their new resting place and frame my response in relation to that.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have described the experience and importance of spending time in the LoC as an artist and researcher, immersing myself in the place and space of an archive. The four months spent researching in and through the films of the Macdonald Collections left a distinctive impression on how I understand my relationship with archival material. Foucault argues that an archive 'emerges in fragments, regions, and levels' (2002, p.10); we can only see narrow aspects of the archive at any one time, exposing our perceptions as being formed 'between tradition and oblivion, it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification' (2002, p.10). It became increasingly clear to me that in looking though the catalogue and then watching the selected films, I was mapping a personal narrative, an archival path through the Macdonald Collection that was also at the same time bigger or larger than I could ever accommodate. This was apparent on a microlevel when watching each film. Telescoping out to contemplate how the film resonated with me was complicated by the need to physically stop the film, stop the watching, so I consider my understandings of the relations between the bodies on screen, with my body, but also the physical "body" of the film itself.

My understanding of archival provenance is brought into focus through its online status, where its "objectness" is transformed, or in Fossati's terms 'transitioned' (2009, p.133). I understand that the films as images have not changed, the learners being taught how to swim will continue to do this be it in digital form or 16mm film, but the experience

around which they are accessed and watched is entirely different. This space when watching the films where understanding manifests becomes complex. The experience of watching a film as it passes through the Steenbeck is intense: the clatter of the Steenbeck's mechanism and the bright ground glass screen capturing the projected image is demanding. This charged and critical mode is a viscerally enthralling experience as the film passed in front of me. Through my time at LoC, I became aware of my desire being part of my drive to watch certain films I selected from the Macdonald Collection. I found myself caught amid feelings of personal nostalgia and longing, yet all the while archive thinking, attempting to make sense of the film while simultaneously contemplating a creative response, what Jamie A. Lee describes as a sensual bodily reaction (2016, p. 40) to the films I am engaging with. My route through the archive is as much me seeking as it is the archive leading me from one discovery to another. A constant and yet yielding framework that is both rational in terms of my research questions, and simultaneously inspired, captivated and desiring. I discovered through my response to a film's object-ness, that it reduced the aspiration or need to maintain the films origins or histories in my response to it. The film has entered my body and mind, as an experience, subjective, desiring and nostalgic. It feels reasonable, due to this new relationship, that I am able as an artist to rearticulate the film in light of these bodily feelings, 'queer/ed' (Lee, 2016, p. 40) through my negotiations with the LoC protocols. The film, intact, rests safely in the stacks to be recalled and found again. I did not have to prove its worth or shore up its importance or relevancies. Performed objectivity becomes part this thinking, thinking through the description of archivists and cataloguers negotiating how their bodies enacted archival protocols to order and maintain an archive's legitimacy. This suggests to me that the archival authenticity that I was seeking, and any possible transference, is through me, my body, my performance

as an archive thinker, and that it is through this meeting I am able to make sense of the

taxonomy and conventions that maintain what I see as my chosen artefact's archival

skin.

Figure 16 *Que(e)ry the Archive* (2017), performance, Athenaeum, Plymouth.

In this final chapter, I come to terms with how I realise a critical, embodied approach to responding to archival materials through *Que(e)ry the Archive* (2017), a performance presented to a live audience (see Figure 16 above and Appendix D for a short clip of the performance). This work was developed to explore and begin to understand the affect that differing archival states – both on and offline – have on my creative response to my thesis. The archives I am sourcing are still focused on instructional or didactic films, employing the search terms I have used throughout this project such as swimming, baseball, volley ball, clubs, young people, learning, education and play. The work builds on my approach to enacting these films to develop my understanding of what appears to be a widening gap in the consequence of meeting and not meeting. I also investigate a perceived transference in the labour of the archive. Through my practice I respond to

how it appears to be dematerialized through digitisation, via remote connections and across networks. Developing the work at this stage of the thesis, I want to denote where archival protocols appear to shift and submerge in their new online scale as previously discussed by McLuhan in Chapter 2 p. 41. I return to Jamie A. Lee to extend my understanding of "queering an archive" in how I am rearticulating my chosen archival finds. My own reactionary responses and personal archival relationships will increasingly be made explicit in the outcomes of the work, as I, returning to Diane Taylor in Chapter 1 p. 34, put myself in the frame (Taylor, 2003, p. 55).

The latest iteration of my practice research continues to be part of the process of testing and experimenting with film artefacts drawn from an archive and bodily interrogated. I am still preoccupied with a film's usefulness, releasing latent meanings but also testing the films hold on me, and any ascribed political agency that is rearticulated through my response to it. I will discuss the latest practice development, *Que(e)ry the Archive* (*QtA*), a live video mixing of my archival finds and moving image work that responds to these concerns as shown in Figure 16. These developments are coloured by my time at the LoC that I discussed in the previous chapter and continues to play out in the evolution of this research.

I want to come to terms with what I consider the films contradictory incorporeal qualities; the bodies captured on film have long since aged, faded from existence, but are brought into my consciousness again, instantaneously, resuscitated via the Steenbeck when at the LoC or via an online search. I will define my route to articulating my attempt at liveness from the films themselves, where I want to activate the films, through a live mixing and re-editing that will progress my approach to working with

historic films. I will advance the centrality of my body in shaping the work, coming to terms with what I am increasingly recognise as "my" archival finds, where my creative activity activates and possibly extends understandings and readings of archival materials.

<u>Whose Archive?</u>

As this research has developed, I have faced continuously extending choices when examining digital content. Wrestling with this has been made easier by the limitations set by the parameters of this research project: North American instructional film, learning, a narrowed time frame. I have increasingly found the need to question the ideas of a "common archive", where slippage occurs between the distinction between institutional archive and its 'homemade' equivalent on YouTube or Vimeo (Abbas & Abou-Rahme, p. 224). In the previous chapter, I discussed how the authenticity of an archive is maintained, administered by the archivists and librarians. Bound up in this understanding are the protocols and rules that govern and maintain this, where an archive in some sense is performed into existence by its administrators.

I question if these understandings follow an archival item online. When thinking through my concerns of what makes or unmakes an item archival, I have begun to understand that I, like others, have adapted strategies, imported from how I might engage with physical archives, to make the digital foraging and finding of material more happenchance. Aranda, Wood & Vidokle describe, in the introduction to *The Internet Does Not Exist* (2015), that when digitally searching we might attempt to create the chance encounter or surprising find, orchestrated through a digital roaming (Aranda, Wood & Vidokle, 2015, p.9):

> Planetary networks have become places of profound confusion and dislocation. We know from the start that we probably won't find what we are looking for, so we learn to search sporadically and asymmetrically just to see where we end up.

As an artist I find myself attempting to understand the systematic algorithmic returns for what they are, not sporadic chance finds as described above. I am aware of the dissonance created by what, on one hand, would appear to be a never-ending supply of digital responses to my search enquiries, specifically moving image and photography, and returns that appear to be complete. This would seem a contradiction. The sheer volume of the returns from within these 'planetary networks' described above (2015, p.9) suggests an exhaustive searching through orchestrated algorithmic returns. Some labour might be present in my searching for materials, where I look though all the possible avenues, where in fact I have simply relied on the remote responses to the enquires, and the true labour of the archivist is replaced by an algorithm.

I am not investigating born digital content, a term to describe content created or originating digitally, but films that have been captured, scanned or converted and placed online. I am considering object-based records and collections that have been made available through a process of digitisation, having previously been in physical circulation. The process of re-archiving the archived for online dispersal is at once liberating in a Benjaminian sense (2008, p.10), since the artefacts are no longer available solely in a building, region or country, but are everywhere simultaneously. This is equally problematised, however, by how particular archives are selected for online release, prone to new hierarchical agendas. This is less obvious to a researcher, or in my case, artist, if a complete collection is digitised. Nonetheless, it still means that the selection and distribution of specific content becomes even more codified and biased by this

process that might be fragmented or not 'complete' due to ideas around taste, popularity, commerce and political agendas. The "space" online archives inhabit is ubiquitous, via a digital screen, where the mediumship of social media and corporate platforms creates further layers, muting the difference on the surface of each of the search returns (Steyerl, 2015, p. 12).

In light of this, and when accessing online archives, I am haunted by my past dealings with the archive's analogue counterparts, encounters such as those at the LoC that were so visceral and meaningful to my creative process and understanding of my archival finds, where the digital screen is not. I do not pine for what is unmistakably an engrossing meeting with an historic object when searching and finding the online equivalents, I recognise them as a different aspect of archival activity, through my archive thinking. Where my previous response was to attempt re-enactment, I am now drawn to attempt to somehow simply make live this encounter, the watching of the films, archive thinking through how I creatively manifest my concerns around understanding online archives' new taxonomies. *QtA* is my attempt to create a visually sensorial affect of this, where I try and impart how the film artefacts are held in suspension online, awaiting instantaneous discovery, with me as a portal enacting and shaping the visual mixing through my take on a subjective algorithmic process.

Figure 17. *Qu(e)ery the Archive* (2017), performance, Athenaeum, Plymouth.

In making *QtA* I had an opportunity to test how I could rearticulate and enact the footage I found myself increasingly drawn to when looking for the active body in the archive. It was, a performance of live mixed video and audio of my archival finds to date, presented as part of a group exhibition and performance event, *Tears in Rain* at the Athenaeum, Plymouth, in 2017. I intended to manifest a definitive relationship between the video clips I had selected and myself to an audience. I wanted to collapse any sense of objectivity or distance through emphasising my being present, responsive and 'in the mix' as shown in Figure 16. I sought to position the archival footage and myself on stage, thinking through Jamie A. Lee's discussion in Chapter 4 p. 89 of responding to an archive through my subjective drives and desires.

The footage I drew upon was from the archive.org website, augmented by the films that I captured for research purposes while in the Macdonald Collection at the LoC. Through reflecting on my research enquiries, I was aware that within the selection of films focused around instructional film, I chose films that directly involved the body being athletic and active. The films also tended, without being specifically sought, to reveal the male body in action. I was not ignorant of my own subjectivity in terms of the male body, but this was also consequential in the films' content; particularly the sports films I found which were crowded with male bodies. This was to a degree consequential, although I did not use gendered terminology outside of the sports themselves, e.g. bowling or swimming. Lee's point raised in Chapter 4 p. 89 rings true here in how I have been drawn towards certain artefacts as well as being led by them (2016, p. 37).

This question of the body became more redolent in thinking through how the films map my thinking retrospectively. Presented together they are my selection, created through the provenance of my searches. While reviewing the singularity of each video clip I had gathered, I was starting to understand how the clips together operated as a continuous answer, from the subjective terms that led me to have discovered and now responded to them. I wanted to archivally think through the film's digital existence – whether online or captured by me with my smartphone. Not unlike the increasing availability of online media that is shorn of its original context, I was exemplifying Brad Troemel's assertion in his essay *Art After Social Media* (2014, p. 39), discussed in the introduction, where any archival agency ebbs away as the digital artefact travels across online platforms. The videos replay in a continuous state of temporal limbo, not mine to possess, but held online to draw upon. Their archival status begins to become arbitrary. I see how their historical relations become less noteworthy than their availability to be shared as a

digital spectacle. This was also a means for the clips to be seen through me, articulated by my sensibilities, reasoning and desires. Stephanie Bailey in *Our Space: Take the Net in Your Hand* notes from artist Jonathan Harris (Harris cited in Bailey, 2014, p.131):

> I believe that the Internet is becoming a planetary meta-organism, but that it is up to us to guide its evolution, and to shape it into a space we actually want to inhabit - one that can understand and honour both the individual human and human collective, just like real life does.

When accessed, I wanted to make sense of the spectacle and richness of each of the clips, but also be clear as to their origin. Although I found the archival materials through online portals and archival stacks, the clips are re-invigorated and centred through me, my archival thinking and my live action. My understanding of the different archival status of the clips became subordinate to my desire to create a performance for the clips to exist within. I began to see the clips in a state of flux, an ebb and flow of bodies as my digital "stream" of videos, and as Harris recommends, attempting to honour 'the individual human and human collective' (2014, p.131).

The Live Mix

I continued the same approach in my digital searching and selection of the useful and function films as I had done previously at the LoC. The video clips ranged from depicting how young people might understand how manners impacted on social relationships, to children discussing learnt behaviours and the differences of good and bad decisions, through to young men being trained in sports and why they should join the US Marines as show in Figures 18.1 – 18.3 below.

Figure 18.1 Qu(e)ery the Archive (2017), performance, Athenaeum, Plymouth.

Figure 18.2 *Qu(e)ery the Archive* (2017), performance, Athenaeum, Plymouth.

Figure 18.3 Qu(e)ery the Archive (2017), performance, Athenaeum, Plymouth.

The notional terms of learning, sport, swimming and so on, has stayed consistent since starting the research project. I was initially aware of the need to maintain a focus for the sake of the research project due to the endless possibilities of finding new films. As this project has progressed, the clips increasingly focused on the active male body. My understanding of the differences of the films – either digitised analogue films captured

by me or online search returns from the Prelinger Archive – becoming less pertinent as I started to understand that any consistency was through my articulation of them, how I came to terms with any differing archival protocols. This context was also shaped by my choices of films, why I selected each one. I wanted the videos played together, overlapping and slipping to produce an amalgamated version of my searches, in a temporal limbo from their archival sources. Without deliberately setting out to undermine their archival categorisation, it became a process of sense making, compelling the relationships between the films, where the hard sought and well-maintained clips from the LoC became intertwined with the instantaneous online material. I also wanted to intensify how I might inflate the moment of solipsistic digital encounter and experiment with an alternative way to experience the films. This intermixing meant the videos crossed each other on the screen, visually faded into each other, blurring the boundaries between the films. It allowed for an unearthing of new possible meanings beyond their original intention. I was recognising how all the films I had selected are making their slow march to the ubiquitous digital screen if they have not arrived already. Their individual didactic drives and intentions become consumed in *QtA*, as they will eventually be online; they are briefly found and made a spectacle before being discarded again, in an ebb and flow of live and volatile bodies.

Technically I wanted to complicate two forms of mixing – the audio and the video of the found archival material, by mixing the video and audio together. I wanted to experiment with how the films would then be viewed and experienced through the obscuring of the individual videos as a consequential process; a stream of parts of the archive materials that I had compiled. I sought to manifest the video clips, transmuting the digital files, beyond their historic value, where I began to personally retune the defining archival

markers or protocols, making them visually and audibly arresting in and of themselves. There was an attempt to create a narrative with the clips, not unlike a script or score, generating a less haphazard mixing that appeared more seamless and intuited. This chimed with how I wanted to force the films to work with and against each other, making them immediate and present, while simultaneously dissolving their individual cohesiveness, a making strange the status of the clips to create a collective image or live stream of my original search. To my mind I was developing a live version of the algorithm process, where the enquiry and routes through to a result were through me, and also, for a moment at least, a discernible aspect of a personal archive.

My Archive

QtA was an ongoing development of my archive thinking. I wanted to think through the selections I have made, what the various online and analogue searches revealed – using the same search terms as I had used previously: learning, baseball, leisure pursuits, swimming and training. I wanted to speculate on how my choices created an idiosyncratic provenance in my selection of them. The common factor in the films' grouping, a possible new archival subset, was me. I wanted to represent this self-orchestration by making live a relationship I had with them; representing how the films appeared to me as a form of consciousness through a mass of interconnected bodies. These bodies that were active, interspersed, mixed up, and through my body, sexualised, gendered, fraught and complicit. Returning to Jamie A. Lee's thoughts on her time in the Arizona Queer Archives, she considers this desirable gaze, 'The body remembers. The body holds it's knowing of those times passed and moves quickly through its own inventory-taking of such non-conscious memories' (2016, p.36). The films I have selected present my externalised desire, mixing the non-conscious archived

memories with my own, overlaying and interposing upon each other. There is also a tension for me in coming to terms with the archival obligation and, to some extent, protocol, that I feel as an artist researcher towards these films. I question how I should deal with historically framed, non-digitally born artefacts. I am preoccupied with an observance, if not obedience, to the films archivalness, where it came from, and if missing in the case of digital content, how can I inflate this being from somewhere again through art making. This tension is made to feel all the more urgent when these bodies, the stories or depictions of human activity, are distributed through ubiquitous digital platforms, becoming increasingly anonymous and untethered from their archival moorings.

Affective Algorithm

An algorithm is a set of exacting instructions that produces a planned series of outcomes, where accuracy and relevance is predicated on exactitude and complexity of the instructions. When online searching, in the place of the archivist where dialogue and inspiration would direct me towards a particular collection of artefacts, my ingenuity was necessary to reveal what I sought. *QtA* was a creative take on my searching and contextualising when searching online. This was to explore how I managed the films once found, not seeing them as discrete algorithmic answers, but to understand and visually work with them as a whole. I sought to inflate this encounter in what I found personally meaningful in the films. The choices I made in the live mixing where predicated on my subjective decisions, complicated by making the process live. I was experimenting with how I could develop a more meaningful algorithmic relationship with the digital artefacts, a form of 'body medium' where I am attempting to 'port' a history through intensively remixing (De Kosnik, p.227), representing and being

contingent in the live presentation of the work. I wanted to find a way that I could present a sense of orchestrating the instructions of my searches, revealing the answers and presenting the results of my search simultaneously through the performance.

In theoretically problematising the relationship I have with algorithm searching, I can't help but think of it as a non-corporeal archivist mediating my searches, my desired histories, efficiently and impersonally. In his text *The Future Perfect of the Archive* (2018), Simon Jones describes performance as an antidote to 'the readiness-to-hand of smart technology, which has foregrounded our relation to the archive in its step-change capacity to capture and replay ever greater instances of our lives' (2018, p. 310). My approach to this was to investigate how the bodies from the selected films could become a spectacle in and of itself again, released from the confines of the archive, with my body clearly intersecting and technologically re-mediating them. I wanted to draw attention to the films clips' relationship to me, or me to them, suspended outside their archive while in my care.

I am also aware of how increasingly the body is held to account in very different ways, as representative data or evidence, mapped and held in an increasing and endless process of collection, a different form of archival body. The bodies I found in the archive appear more viscerally vital and alive than the continuous contemporary archiving of our body's actions through growing datasets of our daily activity. Gabriella Giannachi in *Archive Everything* states how through a constant absorption of increasing data, 'citizenship in the world is recorded and re-written' (2016, p. 184). I see algorithms as a bridge to how these different types of data are met, offered to me through my searches, but also redrawing how we meet and understand the archived body. I recognise the

bodies I have found might not be as useful statically or for data analysis, yet depending on the algorithmic response, will still jockey for space on the same digital screen.

As an artist I am struck by how digital searching manifests no sense of accountability, where there is no arbitrator or governance on the screen side of the enquiry. It's left to the artist to manage this. The digital archive, the database enquiry, and the algorithmic returns, are completed remotely without any detectable physical consequence. How can I measure what is true or accurate or complete if searching this way? As an artist I am trying to be conscientious in dealing with archival material, but at the same time respond to it with questions that critique how and where it is presented. If in a physical archive, I could not request fifty films in one sitting, but I could via an online portal. Through my own practice as an artist and in this thesis as researcher, I have begun to understand what these circumstances might mean, and come to a understanding where rather than be disturbed by the remote orchestration of my enquiry and consequential discoveries, I have been interrogating these very limitations as a place to spring new work from; I called to the algorithm and the algorithm said go.

I am not rejecting the accessing and retrieving of online archival content. I want to draw attention to, and come to terms with, the temporary and precarious relationships that manifest when creative sense making is just me and the algorithmic returns. The archivist and algorithm become flattened into each other, with any dialogue flowing in one direction. I want to insert my body into this flattened space to process and articulate my archival finds, to begin to construct a provenance around me, testing the algorithm's response. Returning to Simon Jones, he states (2018, p.311):

Performance as an essentially mixed-media art-form has the potential to intervene in this general processing of how we acquire knowledge by using those very senses and technologies, upon which our techniques are grounded, against themselves, to reveal them as fundamentally strange

Developing the live performance encouraged me to find a different way to creatively manifest the clips, a way to highlight the changing status of how their knowledge is consumed and understood. This is my manifestation of Foster's impulsive archive. The instructed bodies visually push and pull against each other to be newly and contextually seen.

Collapsing Subjectivity/New Digital Objectivity

I have to recognise the potential contradiction in my seeking to build an experience around what is ostensibly a digital file. Through this project I have found it difficult to disassociate from the memory of spending time with the original film artefacts in the LoC reading room and how this inspired me. My practice is driven in part by a desire to continue to locate and find new historic objects, replaying the elation and disappointment of the finds. Not inhabiting a space and place in doing so, and now responding to the non-located digitised historic artefacts, is markedly different. Yet I find the digital searching haunted by the sensorial memory of the physical process. Conversely, I am also aware of my initial truculent approach to having to physically search a catalogue when at the LoC, spoilt by the process of digitally searching. My tactic was to think how I might take an algorithmic approach, methodologically searching and selecting to a prescribed set of instructions.

Physically searching allowed me to diverge from a strict interpretation of my search parameters. Searching online did not offer the same latitude, even when taking on the

idea of digital roaming as discussed earlier. My digital search returns lacked a transparency when attempting to take stock of an online archive; I was not able to discern its limits, gaps or omissions. The labour of the archive was dispersed. It was not knowingly or obviously exhaustive, I had to presume the algorithm was written well enough to return the best possible answers to my enquiry. My archive thinking framed the idea of *QtA*, performing as an algorithm, where I was applying a number of enquires to a set of instructions, that offered me a series of choices based on a selected number of films. These choices, through my instructions, were governed by my sensibility, a creative problem-solving process. Decisions were made on the form and action of the bodies in the clips; swimming bodies with military exercises or baseball training with surfing against a backdrop of Waikiki Beach. My algorithmic process was therefore open to interpretation, inconsistent through my inaccuracies, rationalisation and sensibilities. It felt entirely appropriate in trying to understand where to manifest a response that somehow conjured up the protocols and influence of an archivist and librarian through my flawed approach to performing an algorithm.

Looking back on my time of being within the Library of Congress, enthusiastically researching within the motion picture collections was intensively visual and sensorial. I was struck by having to impart physical labour to search the catalogues, deal with the film and the mechanics of watching it, as discussed in the last chapter. I had become used to accepting the algorithmic search engine return, and indeed have made work in part to understand this, in particular *Similar Items (based on meta Data)* (2016) (see Appendix C). But I have also come to terms with how, through my searching, the returns are built around what I might describe as my digital persona, how the search engines make the choices, examining the cookies on my previous searches to reveal what it

thinks I want to see. The digital interface masks a vanishing archival labour that increased digitisation implies.

There was a physical frisson when watching the films in the reading room in the LoC, clattering through the Steenbeck, with stomach punching moments when you might stumble across something that affects you across your sensory plane. Unlike searching online, when you are physically searching the consequence of finding or not finding ultimately lies with yourself: your perseverance, your body, how you speak, negotiate, stand and sometimes physically able to carry the artefacts in question. This type of searching is more active, planned and coordinated. The labour is present; it stretches beyond yourself and occupies the librarians, the archivist, the technicians and other ancillary workers within the institution you are searching through. The consequences of these actions are real, even down to the squeaky trolley delivering the requested item from the bowels of the library stacks or from an offsite facility as it did in my time at the LoC. This is markedly different when waiting for the screen to instantaneously fill with your research returns.

I can but hope that an online search makes the associations I am seeking across a larger dynamic range than is available in one archive. Without any physical implication, your searches can be done wherever you are via a remote connection. This searching, although highly convenient, lacks the sensual or emotional connection to the object, in my instance the actual films. The connections I make with the online films are constructed through phenomenological looking, where I am distanced from its objectness. I struggle to understand the manner of the parameters by which suggestions and alternative selections can be made when searching digitally, without the archivist

or librarian informing me of the range and scope of a collection; what might be missing or what have I missed? There is no one to negotiate with. I am having to trust the algorithmic return.

Correspondingly this lack can at times feel liberating. You assume, possibly wrongly, there will be another find around the digital corner, so there is no limit to your finds. There are no stacks to access to retrieve the item you requested, no time or distance to travel, it's on your desktop. A risk is that some of the contextuality of the artefact, the archival rituals and beliefs, are being eroded, made inconsequential through its ease of retrieval, potentially disassociated from a place, person or thing. Is this really a problem? Accessing an archive online, the digital surface is made of ubiquitous search returns; they are flattened, fast and remote. This is entirely different from the physical nature of the analogue catalogue and films. This means you can search quickly, efficiently and, I would argue, more conceptually. Yet you are lacking the smell, noise and weight of the artefacts so you have to deal directly with the film's context and narrative. This demystifies the 'film-ness' of the artefact and foregrounds its 'content'. This suggests a possibility that gives rise to a different impulse than described by Foster. A different anxiousness for one more click, one more discovery that is omnipresent when searching online; digital files are not heavy, they don't take up space or release their vinegary smell, are instead effortlessly managed and consumed.

Digital Ubiquity

In developing *QtA* I wanted to reflect on what I saw as a ubiquity of how the archives I searched through appeared to me. I want to draw a parallel to the digitisation processes that 'decolonises' archives as discussed by Wolfgang Ernst in *De-Historicising the Archive*

(2016). When digitising archives, removing their provenance and placing them within an accessible catalogue, this process eschews the natural taxonomy of the catalogue's physical structure, replaced by database and algorithmic searching. This offers extended, remote and accessible opportunities to find and utilise these collections. I imagine the shelves and holding rooms of the collections flattened, digitally stacked and made available through a digital portal. This is a process of denuding the films physical characteristics, where the notion of the original film is tested, including its status as a medium, as 'film belongs to those things that change through time, that are inherently transitional' (Fossati, 2009, p. 133). This is not to say that an analogue film's transition to digital is therefore problematised. By its nature, it is unstable and in a state of decay, so digitising halts this process. The removal of the artefact to a digital screen simultaneously emphasises its displacement from a physical archive, while offering a seamless answer to the search, suggesting all resources have been spent in offering you the digital return. The removal of the physical record doesn't necessarily lend more credibility to the database archive, rather it is a compromised understanding of what I see as the labour needed to maintain a physical archive over a belief of the completeness of the digitised catalogue. It's the taxonomical bonds between the archival quotidian that are brought into question, archivally thinking. When you have used the search engine, and been offered the appropriate return, the search return would appear complete, but this surely, creatively even, cannot be the case.

This state of ubiquity – where all the results of the searches into the collections are seemingly made uniform – is a dynamic transformation from the physical need to be present in the readings rooms of institutions. This is in some ways entirely liberating as suggested by Ernst. Collections are opened up, accessed globally, limited only by a lack

of technological infrastructure. The nature of the relationship the artist will have with catalogue finds would naturally be based around this efficiency. Without wanting to ascribe humanising traits to an algorithm, its inherent and possibly blind efficiency, always attempting to get the best answer in the most efficient way, leaves me always wanting and expecting more.

Conclusions

This final chapter maps how I now bodily position myself in relation to the archive, coming to an understanding of how I creatively work with archival moving image, found online and off. The specific films and archives I have worked with, instructive or with a didactic message, have remained consistent. This has helped me focus and develop the thesis around understanding how my body meets the selected archival bodies. In developing *QtA* I came to terms with how I now understand the complex subjective relationships I have with the selected footage, drawn from my searches in the LoC and the Prelinger Archive, and how these can be manifested and performed. Returning to archivist Jamie A. Lee, she describes 'using the body as a framework to understand and reimagine the archives', but see these relationships as reciprocal, where the physical body meets the archival body - 'archivists, records, record creators and archival visitors constitute some of the moving parts' (2016, p.39). What I have attempted to do is for my body to join the archival body, through the selected films, films that reflect my gendered, desirable, curious and as I now understand it, queered body. It is clear to me that through this research my subjective body, how I have drawn particular films and clips together, has to be foregrounded as the link or bridge back the archive, the archivist, my archival body.

Throughout the thesis I have questioned why the work I needed to produce should be live to be fully rendered in the manner I was seeking; for the body to be actively and discursively yielding new ways to understand and critique the archives they were drawn from. I had to come to terms with the inherent quality of some of the clips themselves, recognising that the filmed bodies could be used to illustrate my developing approach to placing myself as a mediator of my temporal archive of athletic and moving bodies. There was also a testing of how I could perform as an algorithm, how I became part of the orchestration of a set of instructions, made choices and presented my findings. Although I am not literally able to perform a piece of digital coding that instructs research engines, this modality was important for me inhabit in relation to how my archive thinking placed my body searching in though an online archive, suggesting that I needed to perform this live to discover this.

In negotiating the two specific archives of the LoC and Prelinger, with their inherently different structures, I wanted to make visible the differing complexities I perceived, foregrounding my body as the link between these two archives. This is archive thinking about being an active participant looking for and watching the moving image material. Recreating the experience of my archival 'moments', encounters that I found visceral and active – Derrida's artefact as a revived memory (1996, p. 29).

QtA attempted to demonstrate these moments with an archive, where I am engaging in a mix of reverie, looking and watching, a live creative engaging. Making this also presented me with an answer in how I see a potential to move, shift, jump and stretch to activate the digital archive. I can become not only a new substrate and trace back to

the originating film, and then to the archive itself, but also stand in for the archivists as an activated (feverish) archive thinker.

This reasoning has led me to come to terms with accepting my subjectivity as part of the narrative of the work, how my archival incursions and explorations have been drawn to films that resonate with me, where I recognise or want to immerse myself in the films I am meeting. Throughout the whole process of this chapter I have continued to archive think around how I should behave, perform and present or represent my archival finds. Foregrounding the relationships that have sprung up between the clips and myself, my performative incursions across the selected archives are a way to "make strange" any sense of a normativity around what I see as tectonic shifts in knowledge production when working with increasingly digital archival sources. The synthesis of these findings has led me to produce the concluding part of this thesis in two final works as a final exhibition. This includes a re-articulation of *Que(e)ry the Archive* (2018) as a standalone film and performance score, *Read Through* (2018) and *Remote Viewing* (2018). This will be further explored in the conclusion of this thesis.

Figure 19 *Meeting the Archive*, 2018, exhibition.

> When it was announced that the Library contained all books, the first reaction
> was unbounded joy. All men felt themselves the possessors of an intact and
> secret treasure. There was no personal problem, no world problem, whose
> eloquent solution did not exist - somewhere in some hexagon. The universe
> was justified; the universe suddenly became congruent with the unlimited
> width and breadth of humankind's hope. (Borges, 2000, p. 69)

In this research project I have explored how the contents of an archive might be met

through an artistic practice. As an artist there is a natural tendency to formalise past

work into a collection, which becomes an archive of practice, of making, that is

constantly referred to, edited, added and stored. Considering this, it is not surprising

that artists are drawn to working with archives, recalling Hal Foster's 'impulse' (2004) to

do so. In this project there has emerged two parallel dialogues or perspectives:

investigating the archive in a larger sense, and specific archives holding instructional

moving image to create artistic work from and through. The archives in question contain

didactic or instructional moving image collections. I have used performance practices as

a proxy for subjectively reasoning how I am able to meet, understand and critique historic artefacts found in an archive through an arts practice. I have explored the point of encounter, the moment the archive is met, whether it's an analogue collection that I have been able to physically meet, or a collection remotely accessed via online portals, exhuming their contents to realise a response. This meeting point has been where I have positioned my research. It is between the moment of encounter and response, where the uncertainty of the moment, the unknown yet authorised component of the archive, becomes known and is played out. The practical outcome of this thesis was brought together and presented in the exhibition *Meeting the Archive* (2018), (pictured above in Figure 19).

The understanding I have gained through this process suggests that I was possibly performing the role of archivist or librarian, revealing historic finds from online archives and collections, where the provenance of my finds was bound to me, so making these newly available. Jaime Baron, in discussing the differences between 'archival and found' documents, suggests that this distinction is becoming harder to define and proposes 'an expansion of the idea of the archive and term "archival" to also include what might have once been referred to as "found" documents' (2014, p. 16-17). This begs the question: can an archive be made outside of the institutional framework, possibly messy, small or inconsistent? Similarly, when does something become archival, or cease to be thus? The archive suggests an immutability, Derrida's 'house arrest' as described by Rebecca Schneider in Chapter 1 p. 33. Yet throughout this project I am testing how to make work 'un-archival', in a sense of playing out my response outside of the archive; a way of coming to terms with how an archive moves to online platforms, and begins to unravel and deconstruct the formula that keeps the records arrested, domiciled and orderly.

I have done this to a large extent by assuming the role of Orlow's archive thinker, as discussed through this thesis, using the distance afforded by it to understand the archive in light of its increasingly dispersed digital form. This role has been employed to create a critical space to understand the performed responses, be they mine or by the performers I was working with. In Diane Taylors' terms, being 'in the frame' (2003, p. 55) elicited a greater understanding of how historic archived knowledge can be articulated anew. Through placing the performers, as described in the works at the heart of Chapters 1 and 2, at the nexus of re-enacting and enacting respectively, I stood at a distance as a director and facilitator to view how the performers in both instances met and articulated their responses. What became clear in examining the two performances to camera was the difference in the levels of vulnerability between process and outcome. The performances in *The ties that bind...* inhabited the roles of the two male protagonists, as framed through the script, props, costume and film and stage direction. It satisfied a number of conditions and similarities to be called a re-enactment, and indeed that was my approach. On reflection it was the differences, as suggested by Gerald Byrne, that 'deconstruct' it to make the re-enactment 'papally vulnerable' (2013, p. 23) that offered me the most agency to take forward into the research.

This making palpable was more apparent in *Let's Go Bowling* (2015), where, rather than re-enact, the two performers were asked simply to enact, receive and respond to the instruction as best they could. Re-enactment is the repeating of a mediated version of an extant event or performance, contingent on the original and measured or reflected upon through the difference; its purpose is to bring forth from the past, for it to be re-

examined, and might be considered as a form of performance 'archaeology' (Arns, 2008, p. 41). Although I found re-enactment methodologically rich as a process, in developing the research I wanted an un-convoluted method of "copying" the originating footage, that could become more focused on the process. I became aware of wanting to enact in order to realise and test my findings based on the originating films. This was circumstantial on the performers and space used, and not framed through any form of exactitude in relation to the original. Enacting therefore was based around my response to the historic precedents in the originating film, being subjective and driven by my practice and not a revival for its own sake. Not being required to learn and inhabit the roles they were presented with freed the performers Leah and Conor from the need to re-enact the originating footage and respond accordingly.

To begin with I examined re-enactment as a methodology to begin to critique how I might be able to make meaning from the moment of archival encounter, and how this moment can be made into work. In the first three chapters I look at *The ties that bind…*, a previous work that could be described as a re-enactment of a scene from a film. Although not from an archive, I was interested in how the film might be treated, found as it was on the Internet when searching for iconographic gay or gay themed films from the 1980's. Although the original film, *In Hot Pursuit*, an adult pornographic film, was not constructed to inform the viewer of the social mores or ways of male interaction, it did so regardless, through reflecting in its time, how two men might interact, through a hyper stylised and constructed scene. I was interested in its historic qualities, and how I could possibly transmute it, somehow study it to draw out meaning. What I did start to do, and why it is important to sit within the confines of this research project, was to reduce potentialities of the re-enactment, and of the actors, to be able to develop the

roles. The rehearsals were short, and the actors did not get to see the originating scene of *In Hot Pursuit*. As much as this was a technique to reduce the noise created by the dissonance between an original and a copy, it was also the beginning of using a performance and art making strategy to critique and comment on the potential of re-enactment to create new possible ways to read the originating film.

Although the process of filming captures the performances, I was interested in what the performances could do in enabling new ways of experiencing the narratives, newly revealed in the retelling of both *In Hot Pursuit*, and *Let's Go Bowling*. I wanted more than to simply replicate existing films, as compelling as they were. Through this process, I was also attempting to develop an appraisal of how we access archives. In using performance re-enactment strategies to unpack and investigate a film such as *Let's Go Bowling*, sourced from an online archive, I was attempting to shorten the circuit of engagement and mediation, where I could discover what felt like a more earnest or honest and increasingly compelling and precarious response. The performers were captured performing the enactment, at the first point of contact. I wanted there to be a sense of the archive newly revealed, newly responded to, so not rehearsed or practiced as in *The ties that bind....* I wanted to see what possible repertoires could be revealed for the performers, and for me watching them, to make sense through.

New Archival Scale

This making sense through a creative practice extends to the articulation of the archive, its structures and obedience as elements in developing a creative response. If the archive is a place where our histories are potentially mapped, how is the shift online affecting this? Taking Marshall McLuhan's notion of a 'new scale' as discussed in Chapter

2, it is left to the user, and in my case, through my practice research, to construct the meaning around the artefact in question. On one hand this is entirely liberating, as there is no subtle pressure of the reading room to obey in light of the benign presence of the archivist or librarian. On the other, in the vacuum of the online space, there is an unpicking of an artefact's place, its authority in the archive, detangling the complex taxonomies that got it there in the first place. There is a palpable anxiety in this for both user and researcher. The choices are potentially limitless, only restricted by the algorithmic search engine return. Unless taken from an archival source and maintained, it potentially suffers with increasing eroded provenance and meaning as it journeys across the Internet. This could be described as a form of liberation, as Walter Benjamin describes, a freeing of the physical object from any ritual holding it in its place, extending its potentialities with a broader and extended audience (2008, p.12). But it also suggests a dissipation, where potentialities discovered are singular, discrete and scattered.

If we describe the archive as a resource for artists to make sense of, or have a sense of, it would seem entirely relevant as part of the creative process to explore how the archive is accessed. There is a world of difference in traveling, negotiating and behaving in the archive as opposed to being able to remotely search and find a digitised item in an online collection anywhere and anytime. A physical archive and its trappings, its ritual and beliefs, maintain protocols surrounding copyright, perseverance, longevity and its associated and implied gravitas. The same cannot be said when searching online, remotely located and unencumbered by an institutional presence. You are able to make up your assumptions and meanings, draw your own conclusions of the relevance based on how you experience it and understand it, be it on a beach, bus top or while watching TV.

What this suggests to me in both senses – inside and outside of the institutional framework – is a sense of agency I can provide to an archived film, to create a potentially meaningful engagement through a physical response in the first instance for the performer and viewer. It's a method of slowing down and looking at the artefact, looking at the moving instructed bodies. This is where the camera comes into play in how I realise my response. I see it as a method of recording and capturing in the first instance that can then operate as an artwork. That is not to say how I have filmed is not necessarily "filmic", but attempts to capture the performance using a minimalist approach. Bill Nichols describes this as a type of documentary film making, being 'on the scene' (2010, p.175), being present, orchestrating the filming but not seen in the results. What this meant for me was that all the action, the responding bodies, were foregrounded. An unanticipated outcome in this approach was the extent to which the films I created appeared to be incongruous. A frisson formed from doing recognisably life-like activities such as bowling, in which there is a dissonance as Martin Esslin describes later in Chapter 2; the performers learning how to bowl without a bowling ball, practising the scenes until they get them right.

Archival Ritual

In Chapter 4 I analyse the time spent within the Library of Congress Motion Picture Library and how it brought home to me this sense of order, behaviour, importance and obedience. The process of requesting, searching and viewing was ritualistic, compounding a sense of gravitas in how I could treat the archival finds. Reel after reel was viewed on the Steenbeck viewer, my hand subtly moving the film back and forth. This felt both entirely engaging, as the films and noise of the machine lulled you into a

sense of being an expert, being part of the archive club, but was also privileged and anachronistic. The focused watching inspired me to want to act, move and engage with the films.

This sense of excess I experienced in the LoC meant I felt freer to experiment with the footage itself, to let the films 'perform' with me as an agent. I spent time with the films; getting to understand their physical weight and presence, their archival origin. I was not troubled with notions of their archival authenticity or the need to portray it; being part of the LoC made this point moot, authenticity was a given. Chapter 5 explores this through discussion of the performance *QtA*, a live mixing of the footage with myself as the protagonist on stage. This pressurised moment was an attempt to compress the notion of encountering the archive into a digital stream.

This sits with three other works in this trajectory, *Similar Items (based on meta-data)* (2017), *Read Through* (2018) and *Remote Viewing* (2018) and a reworking of *QtA* (2018) (see Appendix E, F & G to view these films) discussed at the end of this conclusion.

This thesis, through its practice submission and written exploration, expands upon Uriel Orlow's idea of archive thinking, viewing it as a necessary strategic position for creative practice to extend the understanding of the evolving context of digitised archives. I suggest that this approach is necessary in understanding how an artist responds to historical digital records where the ontology of the archive is brought into question. The digitalisation process in some senses unbinds and releases the archive to be freely mixed and dispersed. I am testing its stability and function through performed incursions, a continuous, partial and temporal re-write that will exist outside and beyond the archive.

The body then becomes part of the artefact, part of how we understand archives; performing it and being it, re-enacting, re-contextualizing and re-historicising it. This is an attempt to slow down, at least for a moment, the archive's dispersal across the digital plane, and to place the body centrally in activating and creating meaning. I am interested in how the digital archive shifts the responsibility or onus (to be accepted or rejected) through to the body, to the individual, to create presence where none exists beyond the digital file. This research project, enabled by my archive thinking, has led me to believe that although we might not need to be our own archivist, working with archival materials should include some understanding of what it might mean. The effects that archival digitalisation has where it potentially breaks the historic and contextual network that is usually in place in a physical archive is problematic. If the artefact does not have its archival skin solidified, it is eventually left to fend for itself, its authenticity and relevance questionable.

Throughout the thesis I have come back to two constants, the body and the archive. I have sought the filmed body learning and its capability to be able to instruct and make this live. The films are drawn from archival sources, where the instructions I have sought are two-fold; films depicting how I can meet the archive and learn, and as an artist realise work. When I meet the films with the archived bodies, there is a sense of complicity in my belief in them, I want to follow the instruction, know what they know, remember my body doing the same. I want to be like them, knowing, able and active. This belief extends to the archive to hold such possibilities to engage with, make live and communicable beyond the stack and digital screen. Testing these archival accounts of history once placed online would seem to be less contingent on its archival relations, and more about a belief or investment in its archival nature and potential. Caught in an

epoch where I have and can access both physically maintained and digitised remote archives, I am able to put my understanding between the systems what is and what is not archival for now easier to discern. Belief might be enough.

My contribution to new knowledge is proposing how Artists working with archival materials can enliven an archive through performance practices, which can engender meanings beyond singular or static readings. This is particularly to understand how we orientate our sense making when we don't meet the object physically, when the archive is online, and how we are able to read it through this new context.

Exhibition as Thesis

Prior to the final presentation in the exhibition *Meeting the Archive*, and after the live performance of *Que(e)ry the Archive* in 2017, I decided to continue to test and develop this work as I felt it raised more questions than it answered previously. The outcome of this reworking also led to the realisation of two final works not examined in the written component of the thesis, *Read Through (2018)* and *Remote Viewing (2018)* that were presented as part of the *Meeting the Archive* exhibition.

In the reworking of *QtA:Test* I asked two performers, Prasanna Venketesh Govindarajan and Rose Weber to respond live to the same instructive sporting clips used in my previous live performance, with a group of peers and fellow researchers as the audience shown in Figure 20.1 – 20.3 below.

Figure 20.1 *Que(e)ry the Archive*: *Test* (2017), University of Plymouth.

Figure 20.2 *Que(e)ry the Archive*: *Test* (2017), University of Plymouth.

Figure 20.3 *Que(e)ry the Archive*: *Test* (2017), University of Plymouth.

In the performance, it became apparent that the emphasis shifted from the archival bodies on the screen to it being a spectacle in and of its self. Although both performers and the film were engaging to watch, these experiments did not foreground my archival thinking. They did not answer questions I had around dissipating online and digital authenticity and manifesting my subjectivity fully in the frame. The feedback from this and my previous performance event was: where did I position myself in relation to the

performing bodies and archival finds being used by the performers to respond to? I did

not want to abandon how I saw the body as method to critique the archive, but realised

at this point in the research that it needed to be my body. Through the complexity of

how an audience might interface with the work, I had to come to terms with how my

body, my subjectivity, could become dramatically foregrounded and visible.

This led to creating *Read Through*, a single channel video of 17mins of my performing to

camera four feature film scripts until I get them right. This was a development of an

earlier work, *Similar Items (based on meta-data)* (2016), where I had a computer voice

read out four scripts chosen from online searches of famous US TV or feature films that

explored education, US idealism, gender and education. This was made while resident

at the LoC, so was produced in the least technological way possible. The selected scripts

were drawn from *Newsroom* (Sorkin, 2012), *Good Will Hunting* (Damon & Affleck, 1997),

Thelma & Louise (Khouri, 1991) and *Erin Brockovich* (Grant, 2000). The outcome had a

clear relationship with my "stripping' out the rich components as I had done with *Let's*

Go Bowling, but this time to the degree of just using the script and a synthesised voice.

A still from the video can be seen in Figure 21 below.
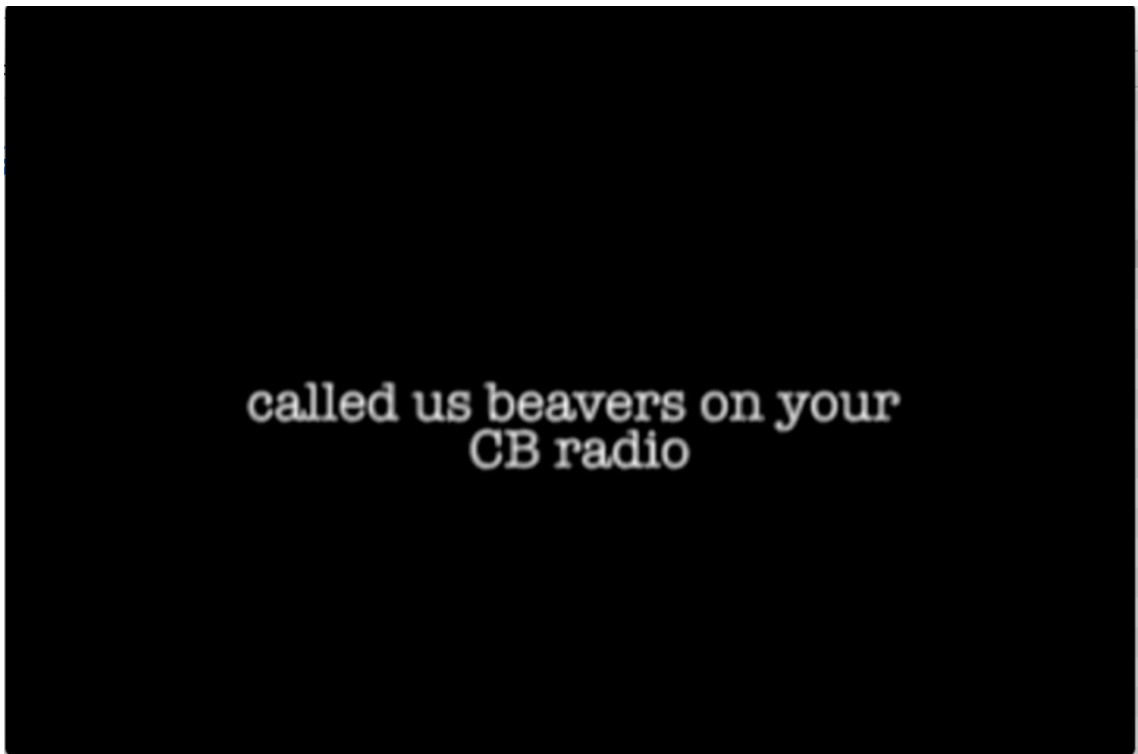
Figure 21 *Similar Items (based on meta-data)* (2016), video still

Read Through

Figure 22 *Read Through* (2018), video still.

Similar to *Let's Go Bowling*, *Read Through* was filmed from a fixed position, although this time with two cameras (as shown in Figure 22 above). The scenes were again

selected from the returns of online Google searches with the keywords that have been consistent throughout this project – that is, learning, education, sport, swimming, baseball and training – but this time with the term "famous scene" added as I had done with *Similar Items (based on meta-data)*. The four selected scenes were taken from the following Motion Picture Films: *9 to 5* (1980), *Karate Kid* (1984), *Working Girl* (1988) and *Field of Dreams* (1989). I followed my previous rules: no rehearsing, trying until I got it "right" and Rainer's 'professional detachment' (Rainer in Lambert-Beatty, 2008, p. 191). Through revisiting the scripts without any scenographic components other than my body, I was generating different outcomes through my repetitive rereading of each scene. The tension arose from the originating film scenes haunting my simplified, sincerely performed versions. The work was repetitive and earnest, with the video tracks slightly out of sync. This was done in light of Esslin's making strange described earlier, while attempting to seriously weld my performance to the memory of the originating films in the minds of the audience.

<u>Remote Viewing</u>

Figure 23 *Remote Viewing* (2018), video still.

The final film, *Remote Viewing*, was a single channel video of 5mins length (Figure 23 above). It was created from video clips from the Prelinger Archive intercut with my response to the originating films. The same search terms were used as I had previously, but this time with the addition of "marines", reflecting my childhood growing up on a Californian military base in the 1970s. But here I also took liberty with the distinction as to what was archival or not, as not only did I use films from Prelinger Archive but I also found one on YouTube, specifically using the dance segments from a musical video created for the motion picture feature *Saturday Night Fever* (1977). I was finally not concerned with the differing archival status that the clips inhabited. I videoed myself responding to the film clips, inserting my disruptive enactment of the action with my bodily presence into the films. The filming style was technically the same as I have

realised previously in *Let's Go Bowling* and *Remote Viewing*; black background and simple even lighting. There was an intentional irony in the actions I was copying, parodying the moving bodies from the originating clips. It formed a destabilising effect in the originating film narratives but also became about my body responding, seemingly overriding the clips and foregrounding my presence amongst the footage. My body was the point of archival understanding, a departure point for the work to need to be authentic. My response was enough. This finally closed the space between my body and the films I was digitally meeting. This became a functional element in making work from this point, the making strange to underscore and highlight the questions I have about the precariousness of engaging my archival histories in making work.

QtA (2018) was remade for the final exhibition, this time all the technological aspects of the live video and audio removed, and the focus simply placed on my presence, performing in front of the edited footage played on a flat screen monitor, made up of the same clips as I had used previously; men being instructed in baseball, volleyball and swimming and US Marines on an obstacle course, (shown in Figure 24 below). I connected back to an element I had explored in Chapter 5 and used the catalogue entries from the MacDonald Collection as a script that were interspersed with my reminiscences from my childhood in the US as discussed in Chapter 4 p. 13-14. I wanted to create a sense of meeting the archive, how I meet the films from the LoC while sitting at a Steenbeck, and how this experience also continued to play in my mind when developing the work.

Figure 24 *Que(e)ry the Archive* (2018), performance.

These final works have not been fully explored in the written thesis but are part of the final exhibition which is an integral element of the thesis submission. *Read Through* (2018) and *Remote Viewing* (2018) are both developed through the questions arising around my subjectivity and how I am able to perform the learning while also putting myself in the frame, that came out of the findings of revisiting *QtA in* 2017. The exhibition worked as a whole to represent my research from *Let's Go Bowling* through to *Remote Viewing*. All the films were part of a processual route in my archive thinking, practically realised and reflected in my research process and findings. I see the whole body of work, the whole exhibition, operating to exemplify my findings and representing my methodology, my thesis: a practice in action.

Returning fittingly at the end of this thesis to Uriel Orlow and his rationale for the need of artists to take on the role of the archive thinker, he states (2006, p. 35):

> With the dematerialisation of archives through the process of digitisation, there is a need to re-assess the material qualities of the document itself. The document is not only an original witness, but more importantly, it bears a potent inscription of something beyond the information contained therein; that is, a message which always needs to be deciphered anew, a latency of meaning which cannot be transferred to its digital twin, for it is tied to the *historical present* of the document rather than access to the past it is supposed to enable.

My approach outlined at the beginning of this thesis has remained constant. It has been to see the films I have created as simultaneously operating to record and document the experimentation, but also to operate as a body of knowledge themselves. This doing and being has been mirrored in my approach to accessing and working with archives, my historic present, archiving thinking and then responding.

A distinction can be made as to the relevancies of the differing archives and artefacts that I have drawn upon to work through this project. I now also understand that these relevancies are made through me, through my interaction and my inflation of the relationships I have formed with, and responding to, the archival materials. This thesis is a starting point to think through the shifting protocols brought about by the increasing digitising of historic records that are placed online. There are new questions around creatively working with archives in how to decipher and understand the distinction between what an archive is, what is archival or archive like, and how performance practices can be part of understanding the increasingly dematerialising differences.

Appendices

Please go to the following web address to see videos:

https://vimeo.com/showcase/6188001 Password: queerythearchive2019

Appendix A:

Paige, S. (2012) *The ties that bind me to my brothers is not fastened to my wrist, but rather wrapped around my heart*. 2' 55'' [video]

Appendix B:

Paige, S. (2015) *Let's Go Bowling*. 8' 50'' [video]

Appendix C:

Paige, S. (2016) *Similar Items (based on metadata).* 14' 10'' [video]

Appendix D:

Paige S. (2017) *Que(e)ry the Archive. Excerpt from performance* [video]

Appendix E:

Paige, S. (2019) *Que(e)ry the Archive*. 10' 16'' [video]

Appendix F:

Paige, S. (2018) *Read Through*. 17' 16'' [video]

Appendix G:

Paige, S. (2018) *Remote Viewing.* 5' 17'' [video]

Interview with Josie Walters-Johnson

Motion Picture Reading Room, Library of Congress, Washington DC - Feb 8, 2017

Steven	I cleverly or not put the questions in here. That is ok. Some of them you might say they are warm up questions in my head. I was thinking about, so some of them are a bit big so I apologise for that.
Steven	So we will start off and I hope they are generous questions, so just to start off with in your mind as a Librarian why is film so compelling in terms of the Library of Congress but also in terms of maintaining a collection and maintaining access to the collection?
Josie	Why is it so compelling?
Steven	Yes to you as a Librarian.
Josie	It is visual history, a culture from entertainment to camera, films to newsreels and capturing moments in history that people for some reason thought were important to capture. So I think it is very neat to be able to see that. I mean you can read a memoir and things like that but to try and get the feeling of a specific time period. I think that is what drives people to watch films study films umm because it is a record of what is going on currently you know happening culturally.
Steven	I never thought of it as seeing, that is really fascinating. The camera seeing and you seeing what the camera is seeing
Josie	The early paper print collection. I think it is fascinating and again because it was so early. This is like 1894 to the latest 1911/1912. I think trying to figure out why some of these things were filmed definitely was obviously was a new medium then but again why this over that type of thing, definitely for the early films I think it was very interesting to think about.
Steven	I never really thought of the camera seeing. That is perfect… So I think you have just touched upon this so in the sense of enabling these collections and we shall talk about that I probably should put that down but in my head how you see the difference between a collection and an archive for me the archive is the collection, because it has been archived. I just wondered actually let's just ask that question now. I don't know if it is semantics or it is a hierarchical language, when I am dealing with the McDonald's collections
Josie	Yeah right
Steven	As far as I am aware it has not fully integrated itself with the catalogue collection or the collection.
Josie	Well ok, it is a weird kind of in my head separation, I guess it depends on how you are thinking of the way collection and the word archive, because both of them could represent something physical but then not.
Josie	For me a collection does not have to be called a collection without existing in an archive.

Josie	Yes, weirdly the Macdonald was in itself, its own archive.
Steven	Exactly
Josie	Before it arrived, Yes, and again would he have called himself an archive or we always referred to him as a stock footage company. With this fabulous collection. That could catch you up.
Steven	This is a good thing, then this is the thing that excites me, sorry this is a bit nerdy, so it ceases being a stock footage collection as soon as it enters library, a larger collection then Doesn't it?
Steven	Essentially, it is still used that way. It is definitely still used that way.
Steven	This is important part of the interview, my questions are around the archive because essentially, I know that there is archival processes and the archive structure and the archive philosophy i.e. all things should be kept for the future, there is a historical imperative for archives and reasons to document. You coined it beautifully in terms of it as seeing history. So there is an archival approach to film and I mean there are processes which you guys engage with I know, but there is something about the moment of when something becomes categorised or becomes worthy enough or seen to be deemed viable that it gets absorbed into a collection or a library, whether it's a manuscript or photos. It then seems to have to adhere to a series of kind of systems and processes which you would call archival processes. I suppose because you are not leaving them in the rain or the sun, you are leaving them stored in a perfectly maintained situation. They are treated equally, which is fascinating as well that this idea.
Josie	But then I guess, your question is, a collection versus an archival collection
Steven	What would you say the differences might be?
Josie	I would say if you are framing it that way, the collection versus an archival collection, I would say a collection is more before we got the Macdonald material or any material. It is items that relate to each other somehow, either by subject matter, production, who knows, but somehow this pile of things is related. When that pile of things transitions to an archive as you said things are catalogued, they are processed, they are re-housed and then they become an archival collection. They follow certain rules in terms of where they are kept, how they are catalogued, whether or not subject access is applied to them, then that would become an archival collection.

In my head that makes sense and to look at it that way |
| Steven | I talk about the Macdonald collection and I see it as slightly self –contained at the moment? Even though it is within the library in terms of access, I got the pesky 4000 Microsoft Word document and I can't search for those films when I go into the main catalogue through the LoC portal, for the individual films, which is not a problem. |
| Josie | That is true |

Steven	One of the things I have been looking at is the difference between how we look "digitally" and how we look "analogue". I know it sounds strange that I am going to make an artistic response to this, but research wise it's me looking at films as an artist. It is incredibly labour intensive, it has incredible repercussions in terms of me watching the film and the light shining in my eyes and they are humming away listening to the speech of the film and when I am on the Moviola, the film viewer for the more delicate films, I can't help but be paranoid, because it is terrifying to think a film might break.
Josie	When it happens, it is horrifying!
Steven	As opposed to seeing something on the screen with no consequence. I am thinking when does the individual item or collection cross the threshold? Tell me if I am getting this the wrong way around, but I am feeling that the McDonald collection is ascending or descending; it's accession is just taking place. It is "part" of the Library of Congress library, particularly the Motion Picture library, but it is not necessarily been fully archived, fully assumed?
Josie	Not yet, something being actually in a catalogue that is findable?
Steven	Yes
Josie	To that point, I will say that there is probably no effort being made currently that any of the records for the Macdonald collection are going to make it into the Library of Congress online collection. That being said that whole entire collection is being catalogued into Mavis, which right now is internal only. However, Mavis is being re-designed so it will actually have a public face. So eventually there should be some outward access to the Macdonald collection without having to physically be here to search for it. Right now, granted we can send that 4000 page list, but in terms of using an actual automatic online place to find it, that will eventually come once we have replaced the Mavis system.
Steven	When you say it is never going to make it into the online LoC catalogue, why is that?
Josie	I am not the one to make that decision but, Mavis for us is more useful in terms of cataloguing individual filmed items, because you can get down to the nitty gritty and talk about the issues with say a specific reel, within a 10-reel film. It is more archival based than library based basically. There is a kind of cross between them. Things that are in the on-line catalogue, obviously it was built for books, not for non-print materials. Mavis however was created for audio visual materials.
Steven	Ok
Josie	So, for us it lets us provide as much information as possible down to the reel or carrier, we interchange those to terms. I think on Mavis it is called a carrier, and we call it a reel, but it is the same thing. You are able to kind of get minute details and talk about whether or not something is scratched, damaged and things like that. That is definitely why we use Mavis for most of our collections now.

	Why will those records will not migrate to the online catalogue? The exact reason why? That is definitely a question for Mike Mashon, Head of the Moving Image Section. He might have to kick the questions up to Andrea Lee, who is Head of Processing, which includes the catalogue and things like that. If he said we are going to do that, I would be shocked. (12'20'')
Steven	That is one of my other questions, and I don't want it to be a value question but maybe it is. What happens when something is deemed worthy and something is deemed not, in relation to the tension about what to digitise and what not to digitise. I saw the original signed Inauguration papers in the recent exhibition here. It was great staring at George Washington's and Abraham Lincoln's handwriting. Then you start seeing the additional digital elements of the exhibition, it was fascinating that you are able to watch the 1910 Inauguration procession on film, where the hats are blowing off. It was really exciting and fascinating. Yet less to think about when it is digital, all you have is the screen, and potentially to find such a clip the algorithm does all of the work.
Steven	I was talking to one of the Education Outreach Team about this who had set the display up, and she said it is actually something they are very attentive to, that there is something very different about touching and dealing with artefacts. For me this would be me sitting at the Steenbeck, or in the machine as I see it as you are resting on it to operate it, the light from the ground glass screen is shining into your brain. It is very different from receiving a search return and finding the film you were looking for instantaneously. It is great that it is expedient, offering greater access, I could be anywhere in the world. I am quite fascinated about how the decisions are made as to what get digitised and made accessible, what I am able to access this way and how that value system is structured. This maybe a complex question and it is not meant to reveal anything other than to understand an approach. But considering the wealth and breadth and magnitude of what you have here at LoC, 2D documents, manuscripts, photographs etc., it's simply a case of scan after scan isn't it? Whereas the complexity of digitising film is another matter altogether.
Josie	Yes, it is.
Steven	Added to that is the complexity of dealing with copyrights and those sorts of things. It is interesting to me that is one of the problems of the digital space is that things become or appear equalised.
Josie	I am not sure that necessarily applies if you were talking about any film or even if you were talking about video or open reel videos. For us in terms of digitising VHS, or ¾ Digi Beta etc. anything that was in a hard case, is the only mass digitisation that is happening and the only reason that is happening is because we have the robots that do it! That could add a whole other dimension for you!
Steven	The upside being, you do not have to do it yourself?
Steven	Well it is. It is an automatic, there is a process called Samma system. I cannot tell you exactly how it works. I believe it is designed by Jim Lidner, but if you type in Samma video robot, you'll find information on it. The first thing we started doing was digitising all our two quarter inch tapes because you can do a bulk batch of tapes and just get them digitised. So there is no, "shall we do this tape, or should we do that tape"

Steven	So there is no need to make those decisions about the quality of the archival material until later? Whatever is it's worth? I used that term badly; I should not say worth.
Josie	There is not a lot of deliberation on whether or not we are going to digitise a tape. If the tape is in a hard case it is going to get digitised.
Steven	Because you have the robot? (17'02'')
Josie	Quite honestly, because we have the robot. But when you are dealing with film or open reel video, 1 inch to 2 inch that type of thing, it is a much more intense process. I can tell you that for right now for our 2inch videos I think our 2inch is still down, that is a problem of technology. There is no one making brand new 2inch video machines, so we have 1 or 2, one low band and one high band. Before this current breakdown, being able to digitise 2inch was seasonal. We could only do it after the first frost, because the machine was so touchy and it is the humidity that gets too high, so that would limit what we can do but when we can do it we would try to do as many as we possibly can. I would say with that the 2inch, our largest 2inch collection is actually the material we received from National Educational Television which then became the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). So people have definitely curating that particular collections, identifying series that are important. The whole process was in co-operation with the American Archive of Public Television, A Public Broadcasting which is what it is called now, which is a partnership with WGBH (Educational Foundation) which is in Boston. That website you can go on there and actually search programming and view it online. It does not require a log in or anything like that. (19'10'')
Steven	I think I found the 'Open Mind' series there, which I used in a piece of work I made. I needed a frame of reference for the political turmoil going on at the moment, and I found James McGregor talking about American Identity in 1984. He described America being in danger of devaluing intellectual ideas in the government, and in the country. He wants to get behind people who believe in thinking things and talking things through rationalising to problems of the day. Considering the current political climate here in the US, it is prophetic. It has happened!
Josie	So that is for open reel video again; you have to decide on what is the condition of the tape, what time of year it is and if the machine is working. So that puts limitations on it. 1inch not so much but it is a matter of what we are digitising and actually because we do a lot of the 2inch with 1inch components to them. Ideally we would want to go from the 2 inch, but again if our machine is down do we then decide to go from the 1inch.
Steven	Do you think that is one of the big imperatives of the Reading Room. I am calling it the reading room in the Library of Congress in terms of Motion Picture. Is it imperative then to enable access? I think this is one of my main questions. Is that a priority in in terms of energetically what the archive is working towards? The thing of maintaining, and there is the thing about access.
Josie	This is where you are… I am going to say a general yes. We definitely want to be able to provide access to the materials that we have. That is why we are here. But then this is where you are going to bump into, we are a library and we are also an archive. I think inherently the trajectories are slightly different. They can work together but sometimes there can be hiccups. As a Librarian I want to be able to provide easy access to anything we can possibly provide access too, so barring issues of copyright and donor

	restrictions, which is fine. But sometimes you cannot provide access to this particular reel because "x, y & z" needs to be taken into consideration; is there is damage, perforations need to be fixed and things like that. So, I think there is always that kind of give and take on either side., trying to find the right balance and for the material itself and the for the person trying to access that material and that can be challenging. I do think that overall our goal is to provide access to the materials in our collection, otherwise, other than doing it for the future which is kind of a weird argument, if we are not letting people use, why are we preserving it?
Steven	One of my thoughts when accessing films here in the Reading Room is that every time I watch a film I am damaging it because its running through the Steenbeck… but then Derinda, the Reading Room technician said that is not necessarily the case, as we a. find the film, b. condition check it, c. we put a spool in it and d. we know if exists. In a sense "liberating" the film for us. (23'20'')
Josie	It is very interesting. I mean there are cases where you are watching are the one and only copy, and it is tightly controlled with what is happening with that reel. But I agree with exactly what you Derinda said. You are not damaging it unless you are literally damaging it. But you should ask Derinda about this because I do remember her saying that it is good for a film to be moved. Sitting on a shelf, in a can, never being used is not necessarily the best thing for it. (24'00'')
Steven	That is one of my questions as well. Because the early film famously explodes due to the early nitrate substrate. Now film is made of acetate which is incredibly stable for years, so I am assuming, and again I making assumptions.
Josie	It has its issues too, vinegar syndrome and shrinkage.
Steven	What is vinegar syndrome?
Josie	It's when film literally starts to degrade. I do not know if you have had any reels suffering from that yet
Steven	Do you mean colour fade?
Josie	Yeah again that happens too, the colour fades, and it goes red. Vinegar syndrome is the decomposition of the reel it is just not exploding but it can be if it is severe enough… 24'35''
Steven	I used to work with 16mm, but I did not have to process it. If you do not process something cleanly, it might take years but slowly it will degrade because it has never been fixed totally fixed…that is not that sort of issue the vinegar thing is it?
Josie	No and we should talk to Derinda into explaining exactly what it is. As far as I remember it is the actual breakdown in the acetate itself and literally gives off vinegar, you could swoon!
Steven	Wow.
Josie	Sometimes you will get a film, they did not check it, or something got sent accidently and you open that can and it can overpower you. I am sure if you walked back into Derinda's space now there might be a slight smell.

Steven	I do smell that; you might have gotten used to it. It reminds me of being in a photographic dark room, it has got that top note of ethanol.
Josie	Yes exactly, you are right
Steven	That was one of my other questions about the stability of film. When a film is requested, it is in Culpepper, 80miles away from the LoC, where all the film are stored?
Josie	Yes, except for the reference print collection, the paper prints collection, the original 16mm films that were created.
Steven	In paper?
Josie	No. The paper rolls are down in Culpepper, the first pass when they decided to put them back onto film, the negatives are in store in Culpepper but the reference prints from those negatives are actually up here.
Steven	How old are those?
Josie	1950's or 60's?
Steven	Why were they printed on paper?
Josie	Originally, it was the only way to register your film for copyright. Copyright for motion pictures did not exist until 1912. So what they would do is take the camera negative and expose it on photographic paper and send those rolls in. Have you not seen a roll?
Steven	No.
Josie	I should show you roll. We will go and look at a roll.
Steven	When a film is printed onto paper, it becomes legal?
Josie	Well you can register it as a photograph, which is what they did.
Steven	That is not really part of my research enquiry, but it is really compelling
Josie	There was no way you could protect a film, there was no copyright for film until 1912. Then even a little bit after 1912, people were still sending in this paper material. We have two distinct collections; we have the paper print collection which is completed works that were registered on paper and then we have the paper print fragments which is what people would send. These would be a couple of scenes, but not the whole film. The paper print collection, the reference prints, are housed here the fragment collections are in the back, I can actually show a fragment. That is actually really fascinating as there was no standard way of submitting either. So people would take reel or take their whole role and expose if on paper and then cut each individual frame and staple it and then send it to us. It's fascinating collection.
Steven	With lovely steel staples slowing rusting away.

Josie	Exactly. It is an ongoing project with the Preservation Directorate. I can show you what they have done. They have done some fabulous stuff. One of the things that people would do when they sent them in, say it was 40 feet of print, they would fold each frame on each other, so it would be popping the emulsion off of the print side. They have actually done a really good job flattening things out.
Steven	That is the internal conservation team?
Josie	Yes
Steven	We have been talking for 30mins, so I have more questions, if that is ok.
Josie	I will say looking at the requests for films that you have sent me. It had me thinking too, we don't necessarily have a hard and fast rule about what gets digitised. A lot of it is project driven a lot of it is actually driven by duplication requests and researcher requests. We do not have what you would call a digitisation policy
Steven	I did a digital humanities training day at the British Library, and the issues came up around copyright and the collections including film. They did have a policy and they are not as big as the LoC. Maybe their funding is better structured or held to account in the same way because they are operating as a separate entity, not at the behest of the government in the same way you are.

I think one of the things that they would say is the objects are very amazing to see but actually how do you get someone across the world to see a collection? Be it because of political reasons, academic research or for pleasure and engagement, and that is what their push is. I think that is fine and that is not a problem and it is interesting because being in the Kluge Center you have some established scholars who berate the digital. But I think there is something more startling than that, is how we are beginning to think digitally and how we respond digitally. It is what I think my research is really starting to become about. This is all the more apparent to me with moving image. Moving image was been analogue for 100 years or so, and now it's primarily digital. There is a space, that I think I am trying to inhabit, between how you would have practically accessed these analogue films and how now we are now increasingly seeing digitally. 31'55'' |
| Josie | Yes |
| Steven | Thinking of how candlelight is still a measure – a colleague is doing research on how this is still how lighting is categorised, lumens, even though this is now referencing digital video. Inherently, digital video can be completely manipulated through camera sensitivity, it can be instantly read, graded, via post digital editing. He is now trying to come to terms with what does it mean to think digitally about light. There seems to be this moment between what digital means in terms of how it is read, and how analogue is read and for both understood in relation to each other, as they have these tangible understandings through language and process. It would seem there is a physical trail with analogue film, whereas with digital video it is disappeared. The labour is not evident. I am quite fascinated that you do not get any sense of the labour when you start to access the Prelinger Archive. Because of the process of requesting and getting the films here, I have quite intense relationships with the films at the LoC. I see them, I hear them, reading them bodily as much as cognitively. I put headphones on, I am in the darkened room and it is not unlike a premeditative state. It's a moment when seeing |

	something on the Steenbeck screen in a wholly experience form the relatively quiet digital equivalent. Even if I was watching the same films, we would read them differently. That is why I don't think the move digital video is the answer, I think it is an answer. The next the last big question for now is the business of cataloguing. I know when we were looking at the Macdonald catalogue you talked about Mavis being the catalogue system being preferable. Forgetting for a moment the LoC online catalogue, in your mind is there a tension between the fact that these collections are contained separately in different catalogues. Do you think that is problematic? One thing I am going to do before I go is to look through the card index files. I know it is too late to order films, but I want to be remined how they work as a different catalogue.
Josie	Yeah in an ideal world we should have only one place to look for material and we don't. I do not know if Mavis will eventually be a cure for that. Again it is going to require bodies inputting material. When you go out and you mention the card catalogue out there is a couple of the main card catalogue which is the middle 2 or 3 cabinets and there is something called the back log. There have been fits and starts of entering all of that into Mavis. When you are going through the main card catalogue you will notice at the top some of them will have Mavis number on them and some of them don't. Backlog, again the same type of project, they started going through and try to put all of those things into Mavis and trying to reduce the number of places we have to search, which is great. There just needs to be a consistency of effort and there is not only that. It's "Oh my god we can do this now" and then something else happens or a funding source runs dry or a contractor ends. It is definitely not an ideal situation. It would be nice to have things in different locations. I am sure this is probably not relevant to this conversation about our Reading Room, but Recorded Sound, which is our sister reading room, have an Alpha 4, which we once had. They still actually have to access that which I think is a DOS base system, I think.
Steven	This is one think that came up when I was at the British Library. They got emails from AOL that was sent via AOL messenger they still have to have all of the software to access those files, so they maintain an old IBM computer with the necessary system on and they have to keep it working to access those files.
Josie	So it be ideal to have one place to look, but that is just not the case. It is problematic in also you know that is why we are here. It makes one necessary, as a librarian.
Steven	This is the fascinating that without librarians what you are describing here falls apart. I absolutely agree with you. I found at every step of the way, in every aspect that I have been looking at archives for over 20 years: museums, galleries, private archives, public archives etc., is the fact that I have always found the key person is the librarian or archivist. The two are sometimes the same sometimes they are slightly separate. I think here there is a cross over in terms of maintaining the system but also being the front line. As soon as I contacted you and we exchanged a few emails you said I know what you need to look at. Now it would have taken me a lot of time or I could have been luckily and found what I was looking for through happenchance. I think there is something about where you sit within the structure of an archive collection that is wholly responsible and fascinating because you also know the idiosyncrasies of each collection. You know what to expect. "Those films are going to be like this, and I know it makes a noise and I going to be present and you are going to be ok". So in other words

	the due care for the items and the researcher are still in place. This is where I think the digital or online access is entirely different. Most theories on learning would state that it is at its most dynamic through social interaction. My approach is through ideas around performance, like looking at how you are performing as a librarian. But you are also literally performing library, you are performing the collection. Every time you meet and talk to someone, diagnose what they need and then you have to contemplate and make the connections, talk to your colleagues and they will talk to people. So there is all this social interaction when you go into the archive. The researcher is a body dealing with another body who knows the collection. I am theorising that if it was a priority for all of the films to be accessible and facilitated, things would be slightly different in this reading room. I have been here long enough to understand bureaucracies and even more so with the new administration and talk about pay and staffing freezes. In terms of the future of the Motion Picture Reading Room, how do you see it moving forward, is it a case with the right amount of funding everything in theory we have been discussing could be possible?
Josie	I think that is one way you could look at it. All things being equal…
Steven	Do you need to change that much?
Josie	I think we need to do a fair amount of changing, but again that also works in co-operation with policies that need to change specifically copyright policies that need to change. I would love to see more things online in general. I would hope that we are working towards that goal putting more things out there. Even if someone said here is all the money you could digitise everything you want anytime you want, we would still have to go "yeah but". We cannot do this or this, because of this copyright or this donor restriction and things like that. So even if we had all the money in the world, we would create a fancy reading room, we could definitely do that. We do need things to upgrade our systems, we definitely need that. But in terms of actually accessing the collection for content, more things would come to mind but there would still be a block I think. There would still be questions that would have to be resolved.
Steven	What is your take on how copyright could or should be…there seems to be two imperatives doesn't there?
Josie	Quite honestly, I could not really tell you exactly what is really happening. Mike wold be the better person to ask. The issues around copyright, and what is happening, trying to put more material online. I would like to see more. Have you seen National Archives website? They show a 2min clip of something, which is better than not havening anything showing online at all. If we could start doing something like that with things that have copyright issues, that would be great. But that is just me. (44'29'')
Steven	What about the Rick Prelinger Archive?
Josie	I will say, every time I get a question about that collection, my heart sinks, it's such an amazing collection. We have provided no access to it.
Steven	He has donated 20, 000 items?
Josie	If not more.

Steven	And they came in boxes and you can't access them.
Josie	I have heard rumblings that they are starting to process it, what it needs is dedicated group of processing and cataloguing people to just go through it, identify what is there, if there are multiple items, create condition s reports and things like that. Just get it into Marvis
Steven	I thought he digitised the collection?
Josie	Not the whole thing, just about 2500-3000 titles. For a while people would come to us to us because they want high definition, and you can only get that if you go back to the original film. We can't go back to the original film because it's not processed. It's most likely on a pallet somewhere. The only thing that we can say, if it's something that has been digitised, is you can go back to Rick Prelinger, as he has Digi beta copies. High Def, we can't do that right now.
Steven	What Rick Prelinger was interested in was expanding the access to these films, but with this question of copyright, he puts them online and states there is an notion of creative commons usage, but the user is ultimately responsible for any copyright issue.
Josie	Because we are a Government Agency, and a copyright office is attached to us, we can't do that. It would be fantastic if we could simply say its your responsibility and had over the video. 47'31''.
Steven	What is the copyright limit on material?
Josie	It was 75 years, but in 1996, they added another 25, so its now 95years. Anything before 1923 is public domain. Anything after that we generally require a copyright search. Someone recently asked when is the next round of films that enters the public domain, Steve Leggit, who works for the National Film Preservation Foundation, he does the Library Films Registry, He gave a date of January 28th 2018, which is when the next batch of films would come into the public domain. 48'46''
Steven	SO increasingly, year on year, the films released will become visually richer and richer, or more technically complex. One more question - So to access the films at LoC, you have to come into the Reading Room here, you have to interact with a Librarian, then to view the films you need to interact with the machines. To me that prefigures how you might respond to it. I therefore struggle with the idea of objectively watching these films in light of this. I don't know how to be objective, when you are going through these experiences, to watch a film. This adds a quality to how the films are understood. You bring your gender, your race, background, where you are from etc. When you go into the manuscript room, it's like going into Hogwarts, with its leather studded door. Also, its freezing! 51'40''
Josie	That is interesting, it colours their research.
Steven	I am looking at this as an artist. I am open to those variables. Seeing the films has been the icing on the cake, but getting to the films, sitting in the space of the reading room. The way I see the film suspended in the Steenbeck, part of the machine, is how I see the films suspended or held in the collection, or archive. My last question – every time I request a film from Culpeper, it has a dollar cost.
Josie	Are you asking what that would be? I have no idea!

Steven	I am thinking of it as consequential.
Josie	Someone has to send the request down to Culpepper; someone has to go to the vault and pull it out, do a check, unusually just the beginnings of the films or reel. That then gets put in a cage. Someone has to load that cage onto a truck, that then gets driven up here. Then it gets offloaded, someone has to deliver the cage to us. Derinda then does her thing to it. She will measure for things like shrinkage. The don't do this at Culpepper. If its tails out, she will have to physically rewind the entire film. Actually, she does that for both, whether its head or tails out. She will rewind the film because she does need to put on a new leader on the beginning and end.
Steven	It is quite intensive labour. I was guessing an arbitrary figure per request. It's within the offer of researching at the LoC and delivered through salaried positions. I only ordered thirty films. I could have been ordering continuously. The swimming films I found were so rich, I was watching one film from the YMCA, watching a film on Styles of America, to a film made by JC Penny, all with one scene or more of swimming. It been very engrossing just watching those. But I have been thinking, is it enough? Do I need to watch even more films? Yet the machinery of the collection, of the archive which is as compelling. There a tension between the mass of the collection, where in theory everything is here, via the catalogue.
Josie	In theory…
Steven	It sometimes feels like pinning the tail on the donkey. It is hard work to be thorough, or it feels almost like an impossible task, because in a sense, there is always more. And that is one of big take away - the physical labour needed to get to watch at these films, the series of relationships and brokering needed. It's been an amazing revelation to be here to come to terms with that, a systematic understanding of how an archive functions.
Josie	That's great. Would you like to look at those paper prints now?
Steven	Yes please and thank you for taking the time to talk to me.

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