

Documentation and the Archive

Documentation and archiving is of interest to me mainly because I practice arts which involve temporary structures and performance. This nature of my work is what drew me to this seminar. The work which I have completed while in the Transart program, large scale aerial installations and performances, exist ephemerally. The only permanent trace of them, if there can be such a thing, is what is recorded by image and writing. This record becomes itself a body of work by which the majority of my colleagues experience my practice. Because of my history as a sculptor, I have an inherent distrust of documentation. The loss of a dimension which photography robs of an object evokes some sadness as the objects or installations are disassembled and their photographs are all that remain.

I found the readings quite interesting as they began to pose ways documentation and archiving can function beyond an attempt to represent what has been. Even though I read the readings in their entirety, I will speak on a couple of aspects and ideas addressed which I found of particular interest. To elaborate on all the ideas contained in those essays would deny the meaning of something which is a diary and would additionally bore you the reader.

Starting out with the article *Curating Now*, I found it interesting how the archive could begin to tell a story of how people move and explore an environment which contains information. The article also spoke to the notion that sometimes an archive can be a place itself and the stories of the past, layers of time, can be read. This then impacts the way we navigate through a landscape or place. An experience arising out of the ashes of the still visible past, merges with the feelings and ideas of the present, connecting and deepening our understanding of ourselves and the world from which we came.

I feel that this is connected with Raimundas Malasauska's answer of "Potential" to Chris Fitzpatrick's question of what is most interesting — Success, Failure or Potential. It is in potential that there exists an open system. Like the layered landscape littered with artifacts of the past colliding with an experience of the present, Potential allows movement, something coming into being from what has been.

This is my central fascination with any documentation and archiving. How by looking backward at that which proceeds us, that which to some extent constructs us, are we able to develop and mature. I found the article, *The Story of Me*, to be interesting in regards to this meditation. It mentions that Tibetan Buddhist Monks, in their solitary meditation, would often keep diaries as a way of coming to a deeper understanding of themselves. Even though their goal is to separate themselves from the repetitive suffering of Samsara, reflection on past events becomes a powerful tool in liberation from the tyranny and suffering contained in habit and Karma. The article argues that this benefit to the individual is also important and of value for the collective. A society which examines the uncensored story of its citizens, of all castes and positions, will gain important insights, insights which will help the health of democratic discourse, and policy and behavioral conduct. This has some similarity to how I as an aerial

acrobat will use the camera's eye to reflect on my posture and lines to allow me to refine a performance or pose. It is through an external perspective, one which I will never have in my own eyes, that I am able to see things which are masked by internal feelings and false concepts of what my actions cause. This example may seem trivial when compared to the injustices in a society, but I think it speaks to a common issue. If we follow what we believe our actions to cause without a perspective which is able to provide reflective inquisition, we are able to fall into delusion and mendacious actions without perhaps realizing it. Just as an acrobat can develop bad habits which will later limit his or her abilities to perform beautifully, a person and the greater society can develop inhuman habits which can lead to unnecessary forms of social misery.

This to me represent the essential nature of the act of documentation and archiving. It allows us to find greater versions of ourselves which could remain dormant in the absence of critical reflection upon our stories and actions.