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Rooms 2084

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Design by Andrew Slatter
London College of Communication,
University of the Arts London

Photograph
Graham Goldwater
Abstract
In September 2017 Room 2084 was installed at London College of Communication (LCC) to display a selection of objects from the personal archives and collections of staff and students in the Design School during the London Design Festival.

The aim of this display was to examine the role such objects play in the research and practice of the school and how these relate to the collection policies of the institution’s archives and special collections. To this end ‘trials’ were held throughout the durations of the show where members of staff would ‘defend’ their objects to a ‘jury’ who would determine if the items were worthy of inclusion the institution’s own archive to become the focus of study in the future.

Our paper offers a reflective evaluation of the value of performing to an audience, within an exhibition setting, an archive selection procedure based on criteria set by Schellenberg and Jenkinson. Our analysis was influenced by a number of interviews, post-event, with archivists and exhibitors that took part in Room 2084. We suggest that this activity moves the theoretical debate, concerning archives, towards an arena of performance and public perception of institutional archives whilst revealing some of the difficulties and friction in archival selection processes currently in use.
Room 2084 – Knocking on the Door of Room 101

The Request

In June 2017 the following information was circulated within the Design School at London College of Communication (LCC)

Time to give your archive an airing …calling all committed collectors, amateur archivists and habitual hoarders of visual and material cultures, be it books, badges, catalogues, postcards, puppets, posters, journals, stamps, monographs, albums, audio tapes, T-shirts or tools.

We’re currently looking for staff and students to exhibit a piece from their personal archive and present their selection to a jury with the aim of being included in a design archive of the future: Room 2084.

The antithesis of Orwell’s Room 101, Room 2084 considers our cherished archives of the near past, present and potential futures. Throughout the course of London Design Festival we will consider how and why we preserve the past and the present for future generations. There will be a number of ‘trials’ throughout the duration of exhibition where a jury composed of archive staff at UAL will debate the relative merits of each submitted object before an audience, with the aim of inclusion in our Room 2084.
This seemingly innocent request would identify the kinds of objects collected within the school, determine the role these play in informing research and practice, and ultimately consider if they were worthy of inclusion in the institution’s own archive. To reference one of the central notions of Orwell’s *1984* this was an exercise in collective memory, as Assmann has noted ‘Control of the archive is control of memory ... one epoch’s trash is another one’s valuable information’ (2010, 344-46 quoted in Egger, 2018, 62). Of course archives are not infinite containers and since the early twentieth century the selection of items for inclusion, and considering which items to retain, has become an increasingly important aspect of archival practice, an aspect we embraced by instigating ‘trials’ by jury (Thylstrup, 2017).

The request resulted in twenty-two submissions from academics and PhD students in the school and librarians and technical staff across the college. Each participant provided an object representing their archive or collection, a photograph of the object and a short two hundred word statement to initiate the ‘defence’ of the object.

**The Court**

The submitted objects ranged from badges to bird’s nests and from magazines to masks, all displayed in a monochrome court at the heart of the building (Figures 1–3). Alternating stripes of dark and light grey on three sides of the court served to constrain the objects displayed on alternating angled and flat shelves. Alongside each object was a label containing the justificatory text, above each shelf was a black and white photograph of the object below stark against the wall.

On the fourth wall a raised stage contained a table and lectern behind which the owners would ‘defend’ their objects. Behind them emblazoned in the Futura typeface was the quotation from Orwell’s *1984* ‘Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’ The stark keyhole logo on the table below the quote was constructed out of the letters O and A taken from the Futura typeface and again made allusions to Orwell by playing with the notion of peering into Room 2084. Adjacent to the stage was a projected ‘telescreen’ endlessly replaying the ‘trials’ where ‘defendants’ justified their own collections.¹

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¹ Siân Cook designed the labels and the keyhole symbol. Andrew Slatter designed the quotation and frieze texts.
Figure 2
Room 2084 Installation View (Photograph Graham Goldwater)

Figure 3
Room 2084 Installation View (Photograph Graham Goldwater)
The Organising Committee

The Organising Committee was responsible for the administration of ‘trials’, the organisation of the display and the text in Futura that ran in two friezes around the upper reaches of the court.

The Lower Frieze consisted of the following words: Disorganised, Fragmented, Forgotten, Incidental, Incongruous, Inconsequential, Insignificant, Minor, Muddled, Paltry, Transient, Trivial, Undeserving, Unknown, Unopposed, Unplumbed, Unpolished, Unqualified, Unrestricted, Unsystematic, Untold. These underline the condition of objects traditionally excluded from the archive.

The Upper Frieze, in contrast, included the following words: Appraised, Assessed, Audited, Cached, Catalogued, Classified, Documented, Evaluated, Filed, Inspected, Investigated, Judged, Logged, Preserved, Protected, Rated, Respected, Scrutinized, Stored, Valued. These signify the state of objects that cross the divide into the eternal embrace of the archive.

The words selected drew attention to the archival process emphasising the fact that ‘...the moveable and indeed unfixable borderline between value and worthlessness, between cultural waste and the cultural archive, is the effect of continuous decisions and negotiations’ (Assmann, 2011, 379 quoted in Ahmed and Crucifix, 2018, 6).

The Jury

Positioned on the balcony above the friezes a team of archivists, acting as both jury and collective judge, presided over the five ‘trials’ that determined the fate of the objects on display. According to Cook

Appraisal is the critical archival task by archivists... As archivists appraise records, they are determining what the future will know about its past: who will have a continuing voice and who will be silenced... Underlying these stereotypes and mythologies was an earnest quest, by archivists and historians alike, for objectivity, for impartiality, for Truth, all extolled as self-defining professional virtues, but alas in reality, all an impossible dream in light of the inescapable subjectivity that any value-creating and value-enforcing activity such as archival appraisal must entail (2009, xv-xvi).

So what kind of jurists appraised and enforced the Truth of Room 2084? They were principally representatives of the institution’s own archives which are primarily devoted to the preservation of art and design objects. Therefore the objects submitted to Room 2084 were most likely to be admitted if they aligned with existing holdings and this archival impulse to specialisation potentially risked excluding those items that might be most valuable in the future.

The Judgement

Of the twenty-two objects submitted and displayed only ten were admitted to the fictional archive of Room 2084 and twelve were rejected. The factors leading to rejection were often disciplinary with a Heuer watch, a Chinese mask and a bird’s nest being refused because they did not directly connect with the institutional archives. Other objects such as condom packets promoting safe sex and a stock photographic image were declined because there are more suitable institutional repositories for them. One item, a specialist magazine, was eliminated because it was already held in the university library collection, but it could potentially belong in the archive and its exclusion highlighted the tension between these different institutional repositories.

1 The Organising Committee consisted of Siân Cook, Sara Ekenger, Ian Horton, Nela Milic, Andrew Slatter, Robert Urquhart.
2 The jury consisted of Sara Mahurter (Archives and Special Collections Manager), Richard Daniels (Senior Archivist UAL), Jaqueline Winston-Silk (Archivist UAL), Georgina Orgill (Archivist UAL), Kristin Hall (BA [Hons] Design Management and Cultures Alumni) and Tito Magrini (Independent Archivist).
Of the ten objects accepted into Room 2084 five were print-based. Two of these, a magazine by the Dutch graphic design studio Hard Werken and a prospectus for Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, related directly to the graphic design heritage of LCC and significant holdings of similar work already in the archive. A further two items, a Sex Pistols badge and a counter-cultural magazine connected to the fanzines in the archive while an American comic book from the 1930s linked to the extensive existing comic book collections.

Many of the objects submitted to Room 2084, both accepted and rejected, were produced by anonymous creators. In his examination of Edward Fuchs early 20th century collections of caricature and erotic art Walter Benjamin concluded that

> Whether devoting such attention to anonymous artists and to the objects that have preserved the traces of their hands would not contribute more to the humanization of mankind than the cult of the leader – a cult which, it seems, is to be inflicted on humanity once again – is something that, like so much else that the past has vainly striven to teach us, must be decided, over and over by the future (1937, 143).

Clearly the archival holdings of the institution already celebrate the work of anonymous creators but what of our future collections? In an increasingly digital environment the archive of the future will see changes to the gatekeeping role of archivists and an increasing engagement with ‘...citizen archivists, passionate amateurs and communities of enthusiasts’ (Theimer, 2018, 14). The resulting collective memories might result in a more egalitarian form of archival practice but there will always be someone in control of the present who shapes our understanding of the past.

**Room 2084 – The Evidence**

The images on the following pages are photographs of the exhibits and their corresponding labels.
Organizational Aesthetics

CONTRIBUTOR:
Joel Kaperna

OBJECT:
Heuer Chronograph
18K yellow gold (The model on which they based the Cosmavox in 1963)

DESCRIPTION:
"Real isn’t how you are made, said the Skin Horse. It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." — Mary Poppins (1961)

Recently a friend stopped me in the street and asked if I wanted to sell my watch, which she had been interested in for a while (this was not the first time this had happened). When I again declined, she reminded me of what they were going for now and that I should be careful, as it is not the same as it was.

We both have an interest in watches, but she is a collector and dealer. I am not. I know very few people that collect timepieces that are never used, instead consigning them to a ritualistic mannerism. Toards never removed from their display cases, never worn on the wrist, but placed in a box or on a shelf, with their names and numbers of visits to each and every event. For me, the true beauty of the object is in the use.

At antique toy fairs, collectors pay the highest prices for pristine toys and models in their original boxes. Yet such perfect items often only retain their value of manufacturing details and the most minor variations. Conversely, everyday objects, such as broken windows or ripped box covers, receive the highest prices.

Collectors fill culture in this way, understanding the allure of objects in display boxes. I would rather see the ephemeral beauty of butterflies in the garden than neatly organized in a display case forever.
Urquhart, Horton

EVIDENCE

CONTRIBUTOR:
Sylvia Grimaldi

OBJECT:
Stock Image Photographic Archive

DESCRIPTION:
Every year, in my secondary school in Rome, we would occupy the school. This meant that we would have a student assembly in protest at one thing or the other (usually a school rule) which would lead to a vote to occupy the school. This was a way for a bunch of 14 to 16 year olds to make their mark and to express their dissatisfaction. The students would then run the building and have alternative classes, concerts, events and general debauchery 24/7.

One year, a photographer from a newspaper came to the occupation. He was not involved in the protest but was interested in capturing the events. We allowed him to come in and document our activities. He also asked to put out press releases to invite him. Two of these photos appeared in the newspaper and were used in a local Italian newspaper. For the next 10 years, whenever a school anywhere in Italy was occupied, my 15-year-old self would be sharing all the pictures of the occupiers in the pages of La Repubblica or la Messaggero. My mother has subsequently collected these appearances throughout the years.
Organizational Aesthetics

EVIDENCE

CONTRIBUTOR: Graham Goldwater

OBJECT: Spirituelles Publicity Cards

DESCRIPTION:
Fake Spiritualists

That Vodoo; that you do, so well?

A collection of publicity cards handed out or found in the gutter in the last 15 years. The cards advertise help in spiritual healing, removal of curses, past, present and future fortune telling, sexual impotency, bringing back loved ones, and relationships, protection against evil spirits, sickness, mental problems, bad luck, spells, illness, drugged children, choice of lucky names, removal of warts and moles, money matters, love, and eyes, palm readings, love, children, court problems, voodoo, witchcraft, job fortune, and lost items, spells, love, and marriage, marriage problems.

Culturally, by far the most popular cards are aimed at Africans in the Western community aiming to daze them. They all promise the same, which is to keep the burdens and unhealthiness of living, to be replaced with a brighter, successful and happier tomorrow. The claims get even more marvellous as they go on, frequently guaranteeing 100% success in all cases.

What they all have in common is that they pray on the most beleaguered and desperate people who are at such a low ebb in their life that they will have faith in anything that will improve the situation they find themselves in.

EVIDENCE

CONTRIBUTOR: Dene October

OBJECT: Doctor Who and History: Critical Essays on Imagining the Past

Imagination: 2007

DESCRIPTION:
"Archiving the Delete"

My nomination for Room 205A is based on the contributions in my edited collection Doctor Who and History: Critical Essays on Imagining the Past, published 25th July 2007. Specifically, the object comprises one copy of the book along with bags of shredded paper and loose 44 pages of original text that have at some point been added out of the chapters. I’ll be contacting all the contributors for their ideas on personal notes about why they talked the writing. My own chapter in the volume is about an episode arising from the archive. During the 1960s and 1970s, to save space and money, an archive was burnt, the BBC’s policy of wiping/erasing many of its ‘golden age’ programmes, believing broadcast television was already history and not recognising the value of repeats to a future audience driven by digital technology. My nomination is obviously a lament on this practice.
Urquhart, Horton

**EVIDENCE**

**OBJECT:**

**Contributor:**

Sian Cook

**Object:**

I'm Shopping Safely Condoms and Lube for Gay Men


**Description:**

Condom pack acquired directly from Healthy Gay Manchester, September 1994. This is from a much larger personal archive collection begun in 1994 to record HIV/AIDS graphic ephemera produced in the UK. Over a 4 year period I contacted over 150 organisations across the country and amassed a wide range of printed matter.

It is significant that a product that was merely spoken about in hushed tones and never depicted in mainstream advertising before 1985 became such an important component of HIV prevention. The 'normalisation' of condoms, especially for gay men, was a challenging aim for any media campaigns. AIDS (AIDS Service Organisation) used a number of approaches to promote condoms – humour, romanticisation, appeals to community spirit - upon visual instructions, as well as messages of self-empowerment and control. By the mid-90s, once the advent of combination therapy, the condom's association with HIV/AIDS was so strong, that its use became part of the symbols of the fight against the epidemic as a whole. While coming from a time of uncertainty, fear and loss, this packaging mainly represents a new way of openness about sexual health in general, the newly mass market community charities who helped to bring this change in attitude about and a celebration of gay sexual identity.

**EVIDENCE**

**Contributor:**

Tony Credlin

**Object:**

**Object:**

Smile magazine issue 11 – Plagiarism special titled “Demolish Serious Culture”

1983 from Bigg Winding Publisher: Lorna Rosen

**Description:**

In 1989 I came across a copy of Smile magazine in my final year at Portsmouth College of Art and Design, just before heading to London. On the back page was an invite to the Festival of Plagiarism happening in Glasgow that summer, to which I desperately wanted to go, having heard reports of it's madcap nature, and having nowhere to stay. This festival turned out to be pivotal in the direction my work would take, opening up rare possibilities, but would lead to the setting up of the Cactus Network and eventually into designing for Deitch Projects.

It presented ideas that I had been thinking about for a year, an attack on the established political order (we were 15 years into Thatcherism), the incendiary possibilities of plagiarising the repetitive rule that form and solidarity played in art and design, the hazy possibilities of copy, multiple names to sign off work and it introduced me to the underground networks of Mail Art, the 1980s counter culture and further subversive ideas.

The front cover asked for an art strike from 1990-1992 for all outdoor workers to down tools, which conjured up many interesting debates. The magazine itself used a multiple name. Smile, at least 20 other newspapers and other zines were put out under the same banner, all anonymous, confusing, underlining and questioning the traditional ‘star’ system of the creative industries. I began to explore the unseen world of Mail Art, one of the few art movements that could describe itself as a global network, and along with Glenn Orians, we took these ideas on and developed our own Cactus Network magazine that lasted for 12 years and supplied 2,000 people around the world.
Organizational Aesthetics

- EVIDENCE -

CONTRIBUTOR: Sera Skeneng

OBJECT: Kui Xing (Ki-i Hing 千熙), the God of Literature, Examinations & Bureaucracy

DESCRIPTION:

This mask is part of a collection of masks acquired through my research and travels abroad. It includes masks from Asia, Europe, Oceania, Africa, and South America. My interest in masks is cultural, theatrical and ethnographic. Masks are fascinating objects both for what they hide and reveal and for the stories they represent.

This mask was given to me in 2010. It is a carved wood mask depicting Kui Xing (Ki-i Hing 千熙), a Chinese Taoist Daoist deity representing the God of Literature, Examinations & Bureaucracy. The type of wood and its precise origin are unknown, but can often be traced to the Guochao, Fujian province area of China known for wood carving. Legend has it that Kui Xing was a gifted scholar and wrote the highest marks on the Imperial Examinations. Usually such achievements would be rewarded by the Emperor, however Kui Xing was unfortunately a very ugly, handicapped dwarf and his appearance shocked the Emperor to such a degree that he refused to reward him. Desperately upset that he had rejected the Emperor and angry that he had not received his award, Kui Xing leaped off a high cliff into turbulent waters but was saved by a god dragon and ascended to the heavens where he was appointed as the god of official examinations and imperial exams. At the moment this mask hangs outside in the garden, as my 3-year-old son finds it too scary and doesn’t want it inside.

- EVIDENCE -

CONTRIBUTOR: Russ Bentley

OBJECT: The Medium Was Tedious/Dont Book the Front! Desperately Bored are now single, released July 1977

DESCRIPTION:

I purchased this single sometime in the 1980s in a small collector’s record shop in Harrow Street, London. It was new and remains a recorded classic do-it-yourself punk record. Desperately Bored released their debut single. "Smoke Grenades"/"Handshake" are their own 45 label in April 1977, with both songs pressed on each side of the record. Due to the pressing cost of cutting a master for both sides, the second side features a side-sixed verse: "It was easy, it was cheap, go and do it!" The first pressing sold out within four months, resulting in a profit of £2.10. Using this money, a second pressing of 1,300 was made, which sold out in a fortnight. The profit from this was used to finance their second release, The Medium Was Tedious/Dont Book the Front! July 1977. Again, both tracks were pressed on each side of the record, and the words "It was easy, it was cheap, go and do it!" form the chorus of the first song. It sets out to inform, educate and arouse others to action: "So if you can understand / Go and join a band. It was easy, it was cheap, go and do it!"
Urquhart, Horton

CONTRIBUTOR:
Monica Seijas

OBJECT:
Fugitive material: a disruptor of bibliographic control

DESCRIPTION:

000 [a]: 9780571322203
10: 37: the Studio Operativa.
235 10: the Lemmer - A critical journal of Illustration / F1
Studio Operativa - Published by Alicia Lindsey and Peter Willan;
467:17: the Lemmer (Irish Journal) #2
720: #1: London - F1 Studio Operativa, pH (2013)
920: #1: 144 p., ill., 15 cm
930: #1: Full colour offset litho, screenprint book
990: #1: Details from front cover: Printed by Coluri. Page
cover 5/8. Print run: 1701. Total cost £1,870
1.0: #1: The definition of contributors in a phase of production,
110: #1: The journal aims to be a relatively infrequent print
space, developing the dialogue that point in art school and
between practitioners daily into a prolonged and documented
discussion about the industry. In education, the theoretical
ideas that permeated it and its social impact.
110: #1: the Studio Operativa.
145: #1: the Graphic arts.
145: #1: the Illustration.
200: 10: Lindsey, Atlanta.
700: #1: Willan, Peter.

Week 27/05/2015, 10.06
H Marietta,
There is one world particularly like to subscribe to its
2015:2014. Published by Studio Operativa. Let me know if
this is possible and if I need any more info about it.
Many thanks
Lizzy
Course Leader MA Illustration & Visual Media
Organizational Aesthetics

CONTRIBUTOR:
Iain Macdonald

OBJECT:
Genesis Concert Programmes

DESCRIPTION:
Alan ‘Fluff’ Freeman somehow caught the attention of my Dad one Saturday afternoon in 1973, perhaps it was the classical neglected he had to Dad buying his first Genesis album, Selling England by the Pound. I loved it, and I was only 9.

Since then I have pored over the many spindly covers of the entire Genesis’s catalogue, song along to the songs, and from 1980 attended every tour until the last farewell tour in 2007. My collection of their tour programmes actually started in 1978, with “And Then There Were Three” from Knebworth, their only UK gig. Too young to go, I could only fulfill my desire by buying the tour programme and shirt with a magazine coupon.

This collection includes a rare signed and inscribed programme from the “Six of the Best” seven gig with Peter Gabriel at Knebworth on 2nd October 1992. Ten years ago I discovered Elbow and bought earlier programmes from “Wild and Wonderful” (1998), and the seminal “The Lamb Lies Down onBroadway” (1974), latterly my programmes became more local, celebrating the lightshows, and the changing typographic rendering of their name that defined different periods of their music.

CONTRIBUTOR:
Craig Burtston

OBJECT:
Low
Low 1977 (8-track cassette version)

DESCRIPTION:
Low is the eleventh studio album released by David Bowie. It is a collection of beautifully formed songs with subtly-ideological reference points and with radical musical structures that mix conventions of pop with disquieting sounds from new electronic instrumentation that followed the arrival of ambient music.

Low sounds and looks wonderful (like New Musical Express said it sounded like “Someone reproduced by Morten Eriksen”), it’s mysterious, intriguing, and soulful.

Low was originally released on vinyl and compact cassettes in the UK. For the American market, RCA also released it on 8-track cassettes, a format that has yet to have a reissue.) I own a copy of Low on 8-track, that has never been opened, never played. It is the ‘Schindler’s cat’ of my music collection. I don’t need to open it to listen to Low and I don’t want it to be opened. Trouble is, I don’t even know whether the tape has expired or not, on whether it’s blank or whether there was a mix up in the 8-track factory and instead of Low, what would actually play? I had a player to play it on, a Stevie Wonder’s Songs in the Key of Life or The Eagles, but I was unaware of the time. Or it could be an ultra rare one-off tape containing the sound of David Bowie, taped out at 4am, in a bar in Berlin, talking to his lover about the Cold War and Stratosphere...
CONTRIBUTOR:
Jon Hague

OBJECT:
Fantastic Four/Silver Surfer: The Complete Collection
Graphic Imaging Technology Inc., 2007 DVD-ROM

DESCRIPTION:
This is a digital collection of more than 750 Fantastic Four and Silver Surfer comics published by Marvel Comics between 1961 and 2006. It includes numerous historically important examples of the comic form, including major and influential works by Jack Kirby and Stan Lee that laid the groundwork for what is now known as the Marvel Universe. The comics included on this disc are produced from scans of the original printed comics, and so include full page spreads and editorial materials, which are usually omitted from reprints but are valuable resources for scholars.

In addition to its content, the object itself is significant in that it is one example of a range published by Graphic Imaging Technology, Inc. (GITCorp) in the mid-2000s that offered consumers massive collections of comics at relatively low costs. Unfortunately, GITCorp no longer produces these collections, with Marvel offering digital comics through its own platform (Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited) and third-party providers (Comixology). This collection represents an early example of digital comics in a format that has not vanished; for this reason, it is an artifact of interest to comic book scholars and historians of digital culture alike.

CONTRIBUTOR:
Nole Milic

OBJECT:
Lifejacket (bought 2017)

DESCRIPTION:
Migration has reached our times. We have not seen such unprecedented movement of the peoples in Europe since the end of the 19th century and we are viewing it as a daily event over various media platforms and often even live.

The Mediterranean is carrying refugees and migrants from different continents to Europe, shaking the concept of the West, sustainability, EU; all of which are in the presence of “the others” becoming uncertain. Their perilous journey is also uncertain and for many, depending on one object – a jacket.

This safety equipment is an artifact for anyone who travels in the West is frequently checked for its quality and fitness for purpose. It is now as far the refugees and migrants, landed in the overcrowded boats. The ones who made it carrying the jacket also carry stories of war, hardship, hope and the jacket embodies them all. It is therefore, a symbol of our times.
Organizational Aesthetics

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EVIDENCE

CONTRIBUTOR:
Roger Solkin

OBJECT:
Sex Pistols Badge
(Acquired Kings Road, London, 1977)

DESCRIPTION:
This thinner plastic badge seems enormous compared to later punk badges. It’s woven, the badge is probably a bearing and sits on the sleeve for their first single Anarchy in the UK (arippelpop! union jack held together with bulldog clips and safety pin) and in its messages to their forthcoming single God Save the Queen. The design is useful for its punk’s branding, incorporating the famous frame now

failure. The Kings Road was the band’s stomping grounds, and the centre of early punkation.

Personal context my picture is a bit of a lie, because it

like narrative and makes you look cool actually, as a spotty 15-year-old I was into mainly disaster bands (Deep Purple, Black Sabbath) and my badge collection reflected that. On the same day that I bought the Polish badge, I bought a Thin Lizzy one I never wore many of my badges because I didn’t treat them like trophies and stuck them on my wall with blu tack.

I suppose the Pistols were represented many things, a slightly older addition to the collection, getting into a new scene, and growing up a bit.

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EVIDENCE

CONTRIBUTOR:
Guy Lowley

OBJECT:
Famous Funnies no.8
March 1935

DESCRIPTION:
Famous Funnies, launched in 1934, was the progenitor of an

enduring American institution: the comic book. Without it, the
graphic novel may not have evolved. 21st century Hollywood

would lack a major part of its output − superheroes like

Wonder Woman, Batman and the Avengers. Famous Funnies

printed strips from Sunday newspaper comic sections.

Comparing comic books, coming in its wake, asked new

dimensions to the mix − like Superman, who began the first

superhero boom in 1938.

Famous Funnies no.8 illustrates other defining features of

the US comic book. Despite what Roy Lichtenstein said,

two comic books did not always look alike. Day work (the

Sunday newspaper sections still) The Ben Day method

was too expensive for comic books, which in 1934 found a

cheaper way to mix their colours. The resulting semi-limited

colour palette, and cheap letterpress printing, helped define

an influential comic book aesthetic. The comic book in

depth known for its characteristic low-and-arcing storytelling, content.

Famous Funnies was not financially successful until its seventh

issue − the first to carry paid advertising on its back cover.

Cover art sells, like this one seen here on p. 18, persisted

through to comics of the 1990s.
Urquhart, Horton

- EVIDENCE -

CONTRIBUTOR:
Paul Glossy

OBJECT:
35mm Slides

DESCRIPTION:

My collection of slides is part of a bigger collection of photograph albums, individual images and negatives I’ve collected over the past 15 years. I have found these in various flea markets, car boot sales and eBay sales. I’ve been fortunate in being able to buy them at a reasonable price. Each one tells a story, and when I look at them, I am transported back in time to a moment captured in the past. The images show different aspects of life, from family gatherings to holidays, and the people I see in them are familiar faces. It is a personal collection that I have accumulated over time, and it is a reminder of the people who have been important to me in my life. It is a collection that I cherish and that I am proud to own.

CONTRIBUTOR:
Ian Horton

OBJECT:
Hand Worken/Wild Pleasen
lecture No.11. 1981 (Acquired 2014)

DESCRIPTION:

For the past three years I have been researching the Rotterdam-based graphic design studio Hand Worken, best known for the 10 issues of its pioneering cultural magazine Hand Worken published in the Netherlands between 1979 and 1982. There are few archival resources relating to Hand Worken in the UK, and initially I had to rely on the kindness of British and Dutch collectors for access to the magazine and archive material. I began this project by approaching the Rotterdam City Archives looking for Hand Worken’s extensive archive of books, exhibitions, magazine, posters and the like. Through this process I began to realise the value placed on graphic design in the Netherlands and how it has influenced the design practice and archival sources for the graphic design historian in the UK. When interviewing the members of Hand Worken they began to loan and gift materials to assist with the research process. One of the members gifts was a signed copy of a preprint, edited by Wim Crouwel and published by the print firm Lexikon, which contains Hand Worken with Wild Pleasen, a monographally described Dutch design collection. The cover image by Hand Worken, specifically commissioned for this publication, is a striking example of their unique photography.

The supporting photograph shows all of the other objects given as souvenirs by Hand Worken and the resulting collection provides a personal and particular snapshot of their design practice.
As a child of the seventies, I played board games with my family. Memory was a favourite. A set of picture cards is laid face down in a grid. The cards consist of matching pairs, and the object of the game is to find them. Players take turns to turn over two cards and, if the images are the same, they turn them back over. You have to remember where the tiles are, and then try and match them. The one with the most pairs at the end of the game wins.

What I remember most about the game is the pleasing size and weight of the cards, and the wonderful, evocative images. I was a bookish child, and the illustrations were similar to those in my Golden Prat Books. My favourite set featured a little girl with yellow pants and a yellow dress. I guess she reminded me of me, I had blonde hair as a child and my Mum would often plait it. My favourite party dress was long and yellow with tiny flowers.

I’ve always collected things, and have several memory games, including one made for me by my partner’s mum. I also have one featuring the work of Edward Monk and another with Charilla Harper’s graphics. A few years ago I made a set for a friend. It’s still in the collection.

I saw the Memory game in a shop, but with all the same tiles it brought back so many memories, and I had to join the collection.
Memories from Room 2084, London College of Communication (LCC), University of the Arts London, September 2017

Were we adding anything to Fleming’s Artefact Study: A Proposed Model as discussed by R. Elliot et al (1983) cited in Pearce (1994) by living it out in a ‘live’ performative environment? At the very least, on the nights of the trials, it would appear that the audience sat squarely with the ‘information supporting the artefact’ in Fleming’s model (1974). As it happens, our archivists chose to spar with Sir Hilary Jenkinson and Theodore R. Schellenberg’s methodologies on archival procedure, by using their classification techniques in deciding whether or not contributors to the exhibition made the ‘archive’, or not.

The choice of these two famous adversaries, with Schellenberg on the side of researchers whilst Jenkinson busied himself with the technical fundamentals of archival procedure, could be taken as the age-old struggle between fusty bureaucracy and innovation that institutions often find themselves caught up in. However, it’s what unites Schellenberg and Jenkinson that is more pertinent to this exercise. Both believed that archives are accumulated as part of our day-to-day work: Natural accumulation is part of our business as academics. What place does this have within an institutional archive? As Fleming noted, an archive assists with our process of self-realisation, again, something that rings true, when we consider the impact an archive has on status and understanding for an educational institution.

Editorial decisions, by the author, to include the opinions of selected contributors to Room 2084 in this article were based on the following rationale: Tito Magrini, as an external to UAL, archivist who was a judge throughout the performances and was therefore able to give an overview of the entire exhibition. Jacqueline Winston-Silk as an internal UAL Curator of Archives & Special Collections Centre at LCC and judge for one performance. Dr Mark Ingham as a detractor and vocal critic of the exhibition, Graham Goldwater as someone surprised that his ephemera was worthy of inclusion and Siân Cook as a dedicated collector of HIV/Aids ephemera and as an exhibitor who had their collection turned away by the panel.
We aimed to create an antithesis of Orwell’s Room 101, Room 2084. Instead we created our very own Ministry of Love. We thought it would be a cuddly Desert Island Discs affair. Cheekily, perhaps it was our collective senescence that brought the dust down from the attic: Were we inadvertently creating a death drive? Were we suffering from Archive Fever? (Derrida, 1995).

Perhaps our executioners block was the number of ‘trials’ throughout the duration of the exhibition, where a jury composed of members of the archive/staff at UAL and student alumni debated the relative merits of each submitted object before an audience.

As one of the judges, Tito Magrini, Archivist at the DACS Foundation Art 360, recalls

> From what I remember, it felt like a blown-up characterisation of the archival practice, an exaggeration of power and nonsense in the old-fashioned way. A despot decreeing the laws of the archival realm. We, the judges, passed the archival principles and measured them against the proposed collections. A playful farce without consequences and responsibilities (Urquhart, 2019).

Did we, the audience, at the performance, run in the opposite direction to R. Elliot et al (1983) and discard our preconceived notions about the artefact and instead focus on the artefact itself? The descriptions of the objects under the hammer were all clearly on display. We had ample time to view both the object and understand its origin, meaning, provenance et al. However, we were swayed by the majesty of the judging panel, who were positioned ‘in the gods’ of the performance, some 25ft. in the air, on a balcony.

**Zimbardo Fever**

Was this really a ‘playful farce?’ Or was it some kind of Zimbardo Stanford Prison Study (1971) played out? The comparison, here, to the famed social psychology experiment is a light-hearted one. Our prison guards were the archivists, our exhibitors, the prisoners. The release into the ‘archive’ was negotiated. By physically placing archivists aloft, allowing them to collude, were we allowing our archivists to bend the social norms of their positions? Did we inadvertently compromise their objectivity with newly perceived authority?

Dr Mark Ingham, Teaching and Learning Academic Lead for the Design School and participant notes

> The question was of exclusion and exclusivity and who judged the judges and the judging. Who was in the club of the archive and who was ‘black’ balled. The process reminded me of Animal Farm and the creation of a hierarchy that resembled what the initial revolt was against. The game of who was in and who was out was arbitrary and gave power to the judges that I think was abused, as often is the case when you give someone that power. The irony for me is that it fell into the trap of 1984 which meant that thought was controlled by a big brother process (Urquhart, 2019)

A bird’s nest, an 8-track recording of Bowie’s Low album, a refugee lifejacket, all earnestly raised aloft. How did other participants in Room 2084 take to the floor? How did they find the experience of defending and justifying their object and rationale for collecting?

Senior Lecturer at LCC, Siân Cook, whose HIV/AIDS collection of awareness paraphernalia did not make it into the ‘archive’; responds that the experience was

> …Interesting, because I have not directly defended it to the ‘academic’ design community before. The audiences I have mainly presented the project to have been in the HIV/AIDS or health promotion/charity sector. It therefore brought my passion (and more emotional motivations) for the subject back to the fore (Urquhart, 2019).

Whilst Graham Goldwater, technician at LCC, whose collection of Fake Spiritualist cards also made the ‘archive’ notes
I have to admit that I did feel rather pumped up at the idea of getting my objet-trouve into the archive. I had been collecting them for ages and felt that this was their time to step out of the drawer and be recognised, I felt responsible for pleading their case and making sure that they got the recognition that they deserved (Urquhart, 2019).

Magrini sums up the offerings for Room 2084:

Most of the submitted examples reflected the professional life of the collectors; some form of printed record and its design, ideal candidates for collections. There were also some objects in the mix which seemed more about throwing the spanner in the machine, interrogations on the archival practice, I found them problematic objects because they fitted more in a museum rather than archives, they required a museological approach. Overall the submitted records stood more on the collection side, there was a certain intentionality and incompleteness in the submissions that as a matter of fact defy the archive. I see collections as driftwood hazardously gathered together, whereas the Archive pulls together, re-form the lost origin and wholeness. (2019)

Ingham takes a more direct method of response “As Gilles Deleuze (1980) exclaims, ‘A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason’ (the archive). Or it can be thrown through the window.’ (Which is what I wanted to do!) (Urquhart, 2019).

What is performance without sentiment and emotion? Perhaps we were only viewing a snippet of someone’s collection but, rooted together, our exhibition became an archive of sorts?

Magrini takes up the point by playing with a quote by Terry Cook (2011),

‘We are what we keep; We keep what we are’. I have experienced through my work that it is more appropriate for archives created by individuals to use the expression: ‘We are what we don’t keep, we keep what we are comfortable with’. Archives tend to document feats of achievements; that specific battle was won and that award was received, glorious facts after facts. I would like to see archives that document the inner self rather than surface activities. Archives that reflect the subjective private self, the fragility of human nature. Archival theory was developed around archival qualities like authenticity, accountability, transactionality and evidentiality. Sentiment and emotions are considered manipulative, unreliable and fallible, the enemies of the objective impartial truth (Urquhart, 2019).

Doublespeak

Why use Jenkinson and Schellenberg as guiding lights for judgement in a performative exhibition that touches on dystopia whilst light-heartedly sneaking a peek inside the dusty drawers of academics? Do we have Archive Fever? Are our archives and collections death drives? So many questions...


Jacqueline Winston-Silk, Curator of Archives & Special Collections Centre, University of the Arts London sums up the institutional response to it all:

By its nature, an archive is acquired and preserved as a whole. Its integrity comes through its completeness (and in retaining its original order), as a record of a person/organisations activities. An archive is formed as a by-product of a person’s or organisation’s usual activities (in essence, an archive is created ‘organically’ (for want of a better word). By comparison, a collection (as opposed to an archive) is formed through the deliberate act of choosing and collecting. Selecting interesting things which reflect a person/institutions passion or mission, and research interests. Items in a collection are
brought together for the purpose of creating a collection, for example to illustrate a specific type of object, or perhaps to illustrate a people or place (Urquhart, 2019).

In the eyes of the institution our offering: a collection, an exhibition to illustrate the acquisition, accession, and documentation of collections that seek an archive. The process of which is born, perhaps from an Archive Fever of sorts.

The gavel has fallen and the court is closed. The archive is archived and Room 2084, no more. Whilst the memory and emotions of the exhibition may have dimmed, our archive from Room 2084 remains, caught on film. Therefore, we may conclude with the final words of George Orwell in 1984, ‘The voice from the telescreen was still pouring forth its tale of prisoners and booty and slaughter, but the shouting outside had died down a little...’
References


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About the Authors

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His writing has featured in numerous publications, on a regular basis, for Grafik, Etapes, Communication Arts, Dazed & Confused, IdN and Computer Arts. Besides working as a design journalist, he also works as a freelance strategist, helping to create the narrative for concepts.

His present research is focused on the relationship between creativity and the environment. Before working as a writer and educator he worked in children’s TV, ran an art gallery and worked in research for broadcast production.

Ian Horton is Reader in Graphic Communication at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. His present research is focused in three related areas: comic books, graphic design and illustration and he has previously published work on: oral history and text-based public art; colonialist stereotypes in European and British comic books; the relationship between art history and comics studies; public relations and comic books.

His book Hard Werken: One for All (Graphic Art & Design 1979–1994) [co-authored with Bettina Furnee] is the first academic study of this influential avant-garde Dutch graphic design studio and was published by Valiz in 2018. In 2014, along with Lydia Wysocki (Applied Comics Etc) and John Swogger (archaeological illustrator and comic book artist), he founded the Applied Comics Network. He is a founder member of the Comics Research Hub (CoRH) at the University of the Arts London, co-editor of Contexts of Violence in Comics (Routledge 2019) and Representing Acts of Violence in Comics (Routledge 2019) and is associate editor of the Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics.