

# Workshop: Is This An Archive?

## On the Limits and Possibilities of the Archive

19th September, 16h-18h

[Online](#)

This interactive workshop aims to discuss what constitutes an archive and how archival structures influence perceptions of cultural memory and artistic practice. Based on the notion that archives are never neutral, the workshop considers the possibilities of engaging with archives and the tensions between preservation and accessibility.

Through collective discussions based on critical archival theory and diverse images, participants will reflect on how archival legitimacy is conferred, denied, or contested. The goal is to foreground the constructed nature of archives and their implications for knowledge production. Furthermore, the workshop aims to highlight the ways in which contemporary artists deconstruct fixed notions about the archive, embracing its potential as a space for multiplicity and reimagination.

Some of the key questions in this workshop are:

- What visual, material, and conceptual criteria define an archive? What role does archival and artistic labour play in these definitions?
- In what ways do power structures shape our understanding of what is preserved and what is omitted?
- Can an archive exist outside institutional frameworks, and if so, under what conditions?

The workshop will be delivered by Sarah Haylett (TATE and UCL) and Theresa Kneppers (Borough Road Gallery, LSBU).

Sarah Haylett is an archivist and researcher. Between 2018 and 2021, she was the Archives and Records Management Researcher on the Tate research project [Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum](#). In this role, Sarah explored artworks that challenged the boundaries between Tate's archives, records, and art collections. She also developed and published the first methodology for reconstituting and rebuilding lost and missing institutional records. As an archivist, Sarah has also worked with several public and private contemporary art collections, including Zaha Hadid, the estate of Donald Rodney, and Malcolm Le Grice. Sarah is currently in the final year of her PhD, in which she investigates the creation and use of archives in socially engaged art practice. Her research focuses on how centering marginalized narratives, collective memory, and the transfer of embodied knowledge via participatory documentation practices could potentially give agency to communities and participants in the afterlives of these practices.

Theresa Kneppers is a curator and researcher specializing in digital curation, user engagement, and participatory practices in museum collections. Their work explores how digital technologies can transform traditional museum models, shifting from authoritative interpretation to collaborative meaning-making. Theresa has curated exhibitions that blend historical narratives with contemporary artistic responses, including [GIFS of Paintings](#) and

[Breathing in the Borough Road Archive](#). As curator of *A David Bomberg Legacy – The Sarah Rose Collection* since 2017, they have developed digital initiatives that integrate audience participation and experimental curatorial methodologies. Their doctoral research, entitled "User Interaction in the Online Curation of Digital Collections," proposes an innovative model of 'networked co-curation' where interpretation is decentralized, fostering user-driven engagement with art and heritage.

This is the second session of the seminar series [Between the Personal and the Collective: Archives, Memory, and Remembrance in Contemporary Art Practice](#), which takes place during the autumn semester. Focusing on the interactions and contradictions between personal and collective memory, the series aims to highlight artistic practices that problematize 'official' histories and ways in which archives are accessed and articulated. Following sessions are also always on Fridays, from 4-6pm:

**October 17:** Panel 1 - Performance and Collective Power

**November 14:** Panel 2 - Women Artists and Intangible Archives

**December 12:** Panel 3 - Erasures and Alternative Representations

**January 16:** Panel 4 - Resistance, Gender and Self-Determination

**Series coordinators:** Amanda Tavares and Tainan Barbosa

**In collaboration with:** Ana Catarina Pinho, Bruno Marques, Dieison Marconi and Paula Ribeiro Lobo

IHA–NOVA FCSH / IN2PAST, Contemporary Art Studies group (CASt), Thematic Line Photography and Film Studies