

Text to be Read Aloud: The Fragmented Archive

An archive can overwrite the dominant narrative. An archive can give people access to ideas outside of a suppressed framework that has been put in place to keep the status quo. Performance artists must look beyond the institution's wall to consider archiving and preserving performance art as part of a DIY community effort. As we break from the institution, we can create fragmented community archives where something much more compassionate can form. A fragmented archive is not an archive with missing pieces. A fragmented archive is a way to understand a complex set of numerous entangled connections and what it could mean to play a small part of a larger whole.

How should the telling of individual and collective stories be done? There is power in being in charge of and creating your narrative. Do not give that up lightly. Do you want a record of what you are doing now to be available in the future?

The use of digital technology and the act of mass surveillance provides an unnerving level of 24/7 recorded audiovisual material. While digital cameras provide consumers with immediate access to content, a digital object's care and preservation can prove much less stable than, say, a physical film. As a performance artist, you must decide how you want your work experienced by others. In recent years, social media sites have been providing a free platform in exchange for your data, but that does not mean that what you are making is being consumed in the way you had initially intended.

Many institutions require documentation of your work or practice to receive grants and professional opportunities. Their definition for documentation suitable for submission often includes requirements such as placing a camera on a tripod and recording for 10-15 minutes' worth of audiovisual content. Video does not need to exist for the sake of the institution. Video has the potential to move a viewer beyond sight/site.

What we envision as a performance artist is a matter of our own perception intersecting with a multitude of narratives and alternate realities. *How do you illustrate the act of performance? Maybe what exists is not always video, so what are other elements of a performance that need preservation?*

When we talk about archiving and preservation, we are talking about care and talking about resources to carry out the act of care. The creation of art can be expensive; institutions provide access to their resources to aid in creating or preserving a given work. However, not all performance artists have a marketable commercial practice deemed valuable by the art market or a given institution.

When we archive, we must exclude, so equity within a given archive needs addressing. *We have to ask ourselves, who is this archive's audience is? What purpose does this art, institution, or archive serve? Who is the primary benefactor? How can the materials be used? Who has access?*

About

april vendetta (they/them) explores themes of control, labor, and sexual play through DIY surveillance to question the human body's physicality and resilience. They are co-founder of HUMAN TRASH DUMP. HUMAN TRASH DUMP is an open digital archive founded in 2015 that invites contributions of audio, text, image, and video files to be hosted and disseminated as material, tools, handbooks, puzzles, and keys. Participant's stream, download, share, and remix archived fragments to expand collective intimacy. Data is stored in a dump not a cloud.

I believe in a world rooted within the practice of archiving as an act of repair. Each shared archive can become a resource and generate conversations that have the potential to aid in reckoning with past and present injustices of the world. To record and review creative self-expression is something that can be an incredibly empowering and humbling experience. I want to live in a world without the threat of violence or imprisonment, where we can be witnessed and be a witness to each other with empathy.



CAPITALISM DOES NOT CARE
april vendetta, digital 35mm photograph, 2019.
camera operator Elizabeth Lamb.