

Archives and Utopias in Contemporary Art

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In an art gallery over the last decade you might have happened on one of the following: a room empty except for a stack of identical papers, white, sky-blue, or printed with a simple image of an unmade bed or birds in flight, or a mound of identical candies wrapped in brilliant foils, the candies like the papers free for the taking. Or a space where the office contents are dumped into the exhibition area, and a couple of pots of Thai food are on offer to visitors, who might be puzzled enough to linger, eat, and talk. Or a scattering of bulletin boards, drawing tables, and discussion platforms, some dotted with information about a role player of the past (Erasmus Darwin, brother of Charles, or Robert McNamara, defense secretary under Lyndon B. Johnson during the Viet Nam War), as though a documentary script were in the making or a history seminar had just let out. Or, finally, a kiosk cobbled together

out of plastic and plywood, and filled, like a homemade study-shrine, with images and texts devoted to a particular artist, writer, or philosopher (Fernand Leger or Merct Oppenheim, Ingeborg Bachmann or Raymond Carver, Georges Bataille or Gilles Deleuze). Such works, which exist somewhere between a public installation, an obscure performance, and a private archive, can also be found in non-art spaces, which might render them even more difficult to decipher in aesthetic terms; nonetheless, they can be taken to indicate a distinctive turn in recent art. In play in the first two examples —works by the Cuban-American Felix Gonzalez-Torres and the Thai Rirkrit Tiravanija respectively— is a notion of art as an ephemeral offering, a precarious gift (as opposed to an accredited painting or sculpture); and in the second two instances —works by the British Liam Gillick and the Swiss Thomas Hirschhorn respectively— a notion of art as an informal probing into a specific figure or event in history or politics, fiction or philosophy. Although each type of work can be tagged with a theoretical pedigree ("the gift" as seen by Marcel Mauss in the first case, say, or "discursive practice" according to Michel Foucault in the second), the abstract concept is transformed into a literal space of operations, a pragmatic way of making and showing, talking and being. This way of working is not altogether new: its prominent practitioners (who also include the Mexican Gabriel Orozco, the Scot Douglas Gordon, the French Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and the American Renee Green and Sam Durant) draw on a wide range of artistic precedents: the performative objects of Fluxus and neo-Concrete artists, the humble materials of Arte Povera, and the everyday objects of Nouveau Realisme, as well as the site-specific strategies of "institution-critical" art (from the Belgian Marcel Broodthaers and the German-American Hans Haacke). But these artists have also transformed the familiar devices of the readymade object, the collaborative project, and the installation format. For example, some now treat entire television shows and Hollywood films as so many found images: fluyghe has re-shot parts of the Al Pacino movie *Dog Day Afternoon* with the real-life protagonist (a reluctant bank-robber) returned to the lead role, and Gordon has adapted a couple of Hitchcock films in drastic ways (his *24 Hour Psycho* slows down the

original to the near-catatonic running-time announced in the title). For Gordon such pieces are "time ready-mades," that is, given narratives to be sampled in large image-projections (a pervasive medium in art today), while Nicolas Bourriaud, a co-director of the Palais de Tokyo, a Paris museum devoted to contemporary art, champions such work under the rubric of "post-production." This term underscores the secondary manipulations (editing, effects, and the like) that are almost as pronounced in this art as in film; it also suggests a changed status of "the work" of art in an age of information, which putatively follows that of production. This new age is an often ideological assumption, yet sometimes in a world of shareware, information does appear as an ultimate readymade, as data to be reprocessed and sent on, and some of these artists work accordingly "to inventory and select, to use and download" (Bourriaud), to revise not only found images and texts but also given forms of exhibition and distribution.

One upshot of this way of working is a "promiscuity of collaborations" (Gordon) in which the old postmodernist complications of originality and authorship are pushed beyond the pale. Take a collaborative work-in-progress like *No Ghost fiat a Shell* led by Huyghe and Parreno. A few years ago they learned that a Japanese animation company wanted to sell some of its minor characters; they bought one such person-sign, a girl named "AnnLee", and invited other artists to deploy her in their own work. Here the art piece becomes a "chain" of pieces: for Huyghe and Parreno *No Ghost Just a Shell* is "a dynamic structure that produces forms that are part of it"; it is also "the story of a community that finds itself in an image If this collaboration doesn't make you a little nervous (is the buying of AnnLee a gesture of liberation or of serial bondage?), consider another group project that adapts a readymade product to unusual ends. Here Gonzalez-Foerster, Gillick, Tiravanija, and others will show you how to customize your own coffin from IKEA furniture; the work is titled *How to kill Yourself Anywhere in the World for Under \$399*.

The tradition of readymade objects, from Marcel Duchamp to Damien Hirst, is often mocking of high art or mass culture or both; in these examples it is mordant about global capitalism as well. Still, the prevalent sensibility of the new work tends to be innocent and

expansive, even ludic —again an offering to other people and/or an opening to other discourses. At times a benign image of globalization is advanced (this very international group of artists finds one of its preconditions there), and there are utopian moments as well: for example, Tiravanija has spearheaded a "massive-scale artist-run space" called "The Land" in rural Thailand that is designed as a collective "for social engagement." More modestly, these artists aim to fashion passive viewers into a temporary community of active discussants. In this regard Hirschhorn, who once worked in a Communist collective of graphic designers, sees his makeshift monuments to artists and philosophers as a species of passionate pedagogy, and they do partake of the agitprop kiosks of the Russian Constructivists as well as the obsessive constructions of the Dadaist Kurt Schwitters. With his altars Hirschhorn seeks to "distribute ideas," "radiate energy" and "liberate activity" all at once: he wants not only to familiarize his audience with an alternative public culture but to libidinize this relationship as well. Other artists, some of whom were trained as scientists or architects (such as the Belgian Carsten Holler and the Italian Stefan Boeri respectively), adapt a model of collaborative research and experiment closer to the science laboratory or the design firm than the traditional artist studio. "I take the word 'studio' literally," Orozco remarks, "not as a space of production but as a time of knowledge."

"A promiscuity of collaborations" has also meant a promiscuity of installations: installation is the default format, and exhibition the common medium, of much art today. (In part this tendency is driven by the increased importance of huge shows in the art world: there are biennials not only in Venice but in Sao Paulo, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Gwangju...). Often entire exhibitions are given over to messy juxtapositions of projects —photos and texts, images and objects, videos and screens— and occasionally the effects are more chaotic than communicative: in these instances legibility as art is sacrificed without great gains in other kinds of literacy. Nonetheless, discursivity and sociability are central concerns of the new work, both in its making and in its viewing. "Discussion has become an important moment in the constitution of a project," Huyghe comments, while Tiravanija aligns his art, as "a place of socialization," with a village market or a dance

floor. "I make art," Gordon adds with an implicit smile, "so that I can go to the bar and talk about it." Apparently, if one model of the old avant-garde was the Party A la Lenin, today the equivalent is a party a la Lennon.

In this time of mega-exhibitions the artist often doubles as a curator. "I am the head of a team, a coach, a producer, an organizer, a representative, a cheerleader, a host of the party, a captain of the boat," Orozco comments, "in short, an activist, an activator, an incubator." This rise of the artist-as-curator is complemented by that of the curator-as-artist; maestros of large shows have become very prominent over the last decade. Often the two groups share models of working as well as terms of description. For example, several years ago Tiravanija, Orozco, and other artists began to speak of projects as "plat-forms" and "stations", as "places that gather and then disperse," in order to underscore the casual communities that they sought to create. In 2002 Documenta II, curated by an international team led by Nigerian Okwui Enwezor, was also conceived in terms of "platforms" of discussion, scattered around the world, on such topics as "Democracy Unrealized," "Processes of Truth and Reconciliation," "Creolité and Creolization," and "Four African Cities"; the actual exhibition in Kassel, Germany, was only the final such "platform". And this past year the Venice Biennale, curated by another international group headed by the Italian Francesco Bonami, featured sections titled "Utopia Station" and "Zone of Urgency," both of which exemplified the informal discursivity of much art making and curating today. Like "kiosk", "platform" and "station" call up the old modernist ambition to modernize culture in accordance with industrial society (El Lissitzky spoke of his Constructivist designs as "way-stations between art and architecture"). Yet today these terms evoke the electronic network, and many artists and curators do fall for the Internet rhetoric of "interactivity", though the means applied to this end are usually far more funky and face-to-face than any chat room on the Web.

Along with the emphasis on discursivity and sociability, a concern with the ethical and the everyday is often voiced in these pages: art is "a way to explore other possibilities of exchange" (Huyghe), a model of "living well" (Tiravanija), a means of being "together in the every-day"

(Orozco). "Henceforth," Bourriaud declares, "the group is pitted against the mass, neighbourliness against propaganda, low tech against high tech, and the tactile against the visual. And above all, the everyday now turns out to be a much more fertile terrain than pop culture." These possibilities of "relational aesthetics" seem clear enough, but there are problems as well. Sometimes politics are ascribed to the art on a shaky analogy between an open work and an inclusive society, as if a desultory form might evoke a democratic community, or a non-hierarchical installation predict an egalitarian world. Hirschhorn sees his projects as "never-ending construction sites," while Tiravanija rejects "the need to fix a moment where everything is complete." But surely one service art can still render us is to make a stop, take a stand, in a concrete register that constellates the aesthetic, the cognitive, and the critical. Moreover, formlessness in society might be a condition to contest, rather than to celebrate, in art -a condition to make over into form for purposes of reflection and resistance as some modernist painters attempted to do. The artists in question frequently cite the Situationists, but, as T.J. Clark has stressed, the Situationists valued precise intervention and rigorous organization above all other things. "The question," Huyghe argues, "is less "what?" than "to whom?" It becomes a question of address." Bourriaud also sees art as "an ensemble of units to be reactivated by the beholder-manipulator." In many ways this approach is another legacy of the Duchampian provo-cation, but when is such "re-activation" too great a burden to place on the viewer, too ambiguous a test (in the sense given above by Ballard)? As with previous attempts to involve the audience directly (as in some abstract painting or in some Conceptual art), there is a risk of illegibility here, which might return the artist as the principal figure and the primary exegete of the work. At times, it must be admitted now, "the death of the author" has meant not "the birth of the reader," as Roland Barthes speculated after Duchamp, so much as the befuddlement of the viewer. Moreover, when has art not involved discursivity and sociability, at least since the Renaissance? It is a matter of degree, of course, but might this emphasis be somewhat redundant? It might also risk a weird formalism of discursivity and sociability pursued for their own sakes. Collaboration, too, is often regarded as a good in itself: "Collaboration

is the answer," Obrist remarks at one point, "but what is the question?" Art collectives in the recent past, such as those formed around AIDS activism, had a political project, today simply getting together sometimes seems to be enough. Here we might not be too far from an art-world version of "flash mobs", of "people meeting people" (Tiravanija) as its own end. This is where I might side with Sartre on a bad day: at least in galleries and museums, Hell is other people. Perhaps discursivity and sociability are foregrounded in art today because they appear scarce elsewhere. The same goes for the ethical and the everyday, as the slightest glance at our craven politicians and hectic lives might suggest. It is as though the very idea of community has taken on a utopian tinge. Certainly even an art audience cannot be taken for granted but must be conjured up at every go, which might be why contemporary exhibitions often feel like remedial work in socialization: come play, talk, learn with me. Yet if participation appears threatened in other spheres, its privileging in art might be somewhat compensatory, a pale, part-time substitute. At one point Bourriaud almost suggests as much: "Through little services rendered, the artists fill in the cracks in the social bond." And only when he is most grim does he hit home: "The society of spectacle is thus followed by the society of extras, where everyone finds the illusion of an interactive democracy in more or less truncated channels of communication."

For the most part these artists and curators see discursivity and sociability in rosy terms. As the British critic Claire Bishop suggests, this tends to drop contradiction out of dialogue, and conflict out of democracy; it is also to advance an unconscious-free version of the subject (even the gift is charged with ambivalence according to Mauss). At times everything seems to be happy interactivity: among "aesthetic objects" Bourriaud counts "meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality, in a word all manner of encounter and relational invention." To some readers such "relational aesthetics" will sound like a truly final end of art, to be celebrated or decried. For others it will seem to aestheticize the nicer procedures of our service economy ("invitations, casting sessions, meetings, convivial and user-friendly

areas, appointments"). There is the further suspicion that, for all its discursivity, "relational aesthetics" might be sucked up in the now-general movement for a "post-critical" culture, an art and architecture, cinema and literature, "after theory:"

So much for my skeptical survey of "relational" art that may (or may not) draw on "post-production" techniques. In the time remaining to me, I want to twist these terms slightly —for, even if they are a little naïve, they also point to real developments— and I want to rethink them in terms of what I take to be a kind of quiet paradigm in contemporary art, an "archival impulse." Why this term? In the first instance the archival impulse is manifest in a will to make historical material, often lost, marginal, or suppressed information, physical and spatial, to make it "interactive". It is also "archival" in the sense that the relevant artists elaborate on the found image, object, and/or text, and they favor the installation format, the default medium of our time, whose nonhierarchical spatiality they often use to advantage (this is rare today). So, like any archive (including our own as critics and historians), the materials of this art are found but also constructed, public but also private, factual but also fictive, and often they are cobbled together for the occasion. Often too this work manifests a kind of archival architecture, a physical complex of information (as in the kiosks of Hirschhorn or the platforms of Gillick), as well as a kind of archival logic, a conceptual matrix of citation and juxtaposition. English artist Tacita Dean speaks of her method as one of "col-lection", while Hirschhorn speaks of his process as one of "ramification" —and much of this art does branch out like a tree or, rather, like a weed or a "rhizome"— a Deleuzean analogy that Gillick and Durant also use. Perhaps the life of any archive is a matter of mutative growth of this sort, through connection and disconnection, which this art also reveals. "Laboratory, storage, studio space, yes," Hirschhorn has remarked, "I want to use these forms in my work to make spaces for the movement and endlessness of thinking..." Although Hirschhorn and Gillick are more suited to my thesis, they are also more discussed, at least right now, so I will focus here on Dean and Durant. Dean works in a variety of mediums —in photography,

drawing, and sound, but primarily in short films and videos accompanied by texts that she calls "asides". Dean is drawn to people, things, and places that have gone lost somehow, become outmoded or otherwise sidelined or stranded. Typically she begins with one such an object or event and traces it as it ramifies into an archive as if of its own accord. Take *Girl Stowaway*, an 8-minute to-millimeter film in color and black and white with a narrative aside. Here Dean happened on a photograph of a young stowaway named Jean Jeinnie who, in 1928, sneaked onto a ship named *The Herzogin Gallic* bound from Australia to England; it later wrecked at Starchold Bay on the Cornish coast. The archive of *Girl Stowaway* forms as a tissue of coincidences. First Dean loses the photograph in a bag mishandled at Heathrow, another "stowaway" that turns up later in Dublin. Then, as she researches Jean Jeinnie, she hears echoes of her name everywhere: from the French author Jean Genet to the pop song "Jean Genie." When Dean travels to Starchold Bay to inquire about the ship, a girl is murdered on the cliffs above the harbor on the night that Dean also spends there. And so on. *Girl Stowaway* is an archive that includes the artist-as-archivist within it. "Her voyage was from Port Lincoln to Falmouth," Dean writes. "It had a beginning and an end, and exists as a recorded passage of time. My own journey follows no such linear narrative. It started at the moment I found the photograph but has meandered ever since, through unchartered research and to no obvious destination. It has become a passage into history along the line that divides fact from fiction, and is more like a journey through an underworld of chance intervention and epic encounter than any place I recognize. My story is about coincidence, and about what is invited and what is not." This archival work is also an allegory of archival work.

In another film-and-text piece Dean tells the story of another lost-and-found figure. In 1968 one Donald Crowhurst, a failed business-man from Teignmouth, a coastal town hungry for tourist recognition, was driven to enter the Golden Globe Race to be the first to sail solo non-stop around the world. Yet neither sailor nor boat, a trimaran christened *Teignmouth Electron*, was prepared, and Crowhurst faltered: he faked his logs (for a time race officials had him in the lead), then broke off all radio contact. Soon he "began to suffer from "time-

mad-ness", with incoherent log entries that amounted to a "private discourse on God and the Universe." Eventually Crowhurst "jumped overboard with his chronometer, just a few hundred miles from the coast of Britain." Dean treats this event obliquely in three short films. The first two, *Disappearance at Sea I & II*, were shot at different lighthouses. In Berwickshire images of the lighthouse bulbs alternate with blank views out to the horizon; in Northumberland the camera mounted on the lighthouse apparatus provides a continuous panorama of the sea: in the first film, darkness slowly descends; in the second, there is only emptiness to begin with. In the third film, *Teignmouth Electron*, Dean travels to Cayman Brac in Caribbean to document the remains of the trimaran: it has "the look of a tank or the carcass of an animal or an exoskeleton left by an arrant creature now extinct," she writes. "Whichever way, it is at odds with its function, forgotten by its generation and abandoned by its time." In this extended work, then, "Crowhurst" is a term that implicates others in an archive that reveals an ambitious town, a misbegotten race, a metaphysical seasickness, and an enigmatic remnant. And Dean lets it ramify further. While on Cayman Brac she happens on another derelict structure dubbed "the Bubble House" by locals, and archives this "perfect companion" of the Teignmouth Electron in another short film and text. Designed by a Frenchman jailed for embezzlement, the Bubble House was "a vision for perfect hurricane housing, egg-shaped and resistant to wind, extravagant and daring, with its Cinemascope-proportioned windows that look out onto the sea." Never completed and long deserted, it now sits in ruin like a statement from another age.

A final example of a "failed futuristic vision" become archival object that Dean recovers, here in the form of immense acoustic receivers built in concrete at Denge by Dungeness in Kent between 1928 and 1930. Conceived as a warning system of air attack from the Continent, these great "sound mirrors" were doomed from the start: they did not discriminate enough, and "soon they were abandoned in favour of the radar." Stranded between world wars and technological modes, "the mirrors have begun to erode and subside into the mud: their demise now inevitable." (In some photographs they resemble such site specific sculpture as *Tilted Arc*, and Dean is indeed interest-ed in the now

stranded status of such works too —she has done two projects on Robert Smithson, on his *Partially Buried Woodshed* and *Spiral Jetty*, a fascination shared by Durant." like these strange monoliths that sit in this no place," Dean says of the Sound Mirrors, fully aware that "no place" is the literal meaning of "utopia". They also exist in a "no time" for her: "The land around Dungeness always feels old to me: a feeling impossible to explain, other than it is just "unmodern"... To me it feels inos and Dickensian, prehistoric and Elizabethan, Second World War and futuristic. It just doesn't function in the now." In a sense all her archival objects —the Teignmouth Electron, the Bubble House, the Sound Mirrors— serve as arks of lost times, perhaps English arks in analogy with The Russian Ark of film-maker Aleksandr Sokurov, in which the here-and-now of the work functions as a crux between an unfinished past and a reopened future. Again, they are also archival works that allegorize archival work as always incomplete, sometimes vertiginous, often melancholic (this Benjaminian strain in Dean may be informed by W.G. Sebald, about whom she has written incisively). Paradoxical connections that disconnect, paradoxical juxtapositions that dislocate: these also inform the work of Sam Durant. Like Dean, he operates with various mediums —drawings, photographs, Xerox collages, sculptures, installations, sound, video— but where Dean is precise about her forms, Durant exploits the "theatrical" space between them long ago condemned by Michael Fried. Durant remains intrigued by the old debates about "sculpture in the expanded field" (he has produced work after Rosalind Krauss as well as Smithson), but he presents this field as now entropic —"installation in the imploded field"— and how right he is. So too where Dean is meticulous with her network of sources, Durant is eclectic in his sampling of "rock-and-roll history, minimalist/postminimalist art, 1960s social activism, modern dance, Japanese garden design, mid-century modern design, self-help literature, and do-it-yourself home improvements." (I borrow this list from Michael Darling, who notes its adjacency to the subcultural worlds explored by Mike Kelley and John Miller). Finally, where Dean models her archives as a semi-private "collection", Durant imagines his as a semi-political "unconscious" whereby repressed materials are invited to erupt. In fact, when his work does not trace an entropic

collapse of cultural differences, it performs an eruptive return of repressed materials, and sometimes it suggests both almost at once. In this regard a primary object for Durant, a former carpenter, is modern architecture in the mid-20th century: he stages a sort of class struggle between the putative elitism of the International Style and the everyday life of the working class. Durant sees such design as a prototypical site of repression, especially "when form is reduced to total functionality," and often his response is aggressive. He has made color photographs that show classic chairs of postwar design over-turned, "primed for humiliation," as well as sculptures and collages that abuse the postwar Case Study Houses produced by Richard Neutra, Pierre Koenig, Craig Ellwood and others in Southern California under the auspices of the magazine *Arts & Architecture*. The sculptures in this "Abandoned Houses" series are rough models made of foam core, cardboard, plywood, and Plexiglas, which Durant then burns, gouges, graffiti, and so on: "My models are poorly built, vandalized, and fucked up. This is meant as an allegory for the damage done to architecture simply by occupying it." (In a further outrage some also contain miniature TVs tuned to trashy soap operas and talk shows). His nasty collages also suggest eruptions of class spite: two bikers suddenly appear in the classic Julius Shulman photograph of the Koenig House, for example, while a biker chick BAs the camera in another revised image (here Durant mocks an exhibitionism already in play in these modernist houses). In effect he plumbs "good design" almost in a literal sense: he reconnects it to the unruly body in order to unplug its cultural blockages. (In different works he has juxtaposed a miniature toilet or a plumbing diagram with an Eames chair, an IKEA shelf, and a Minimalist box respectively.) In this way Durant returns corporeal functions and unconscious desires to our old machines-for-living-in. This is a troubling of both modern design and Minimalist logic on the model of Smithson and Matta-Clark as well as feminist artists from Eva Hesse to Cornelia Parker. Such a move of counter-repression, which is programmatic in such tides as *What's Underneath Must Be Released and Examined To Be Understood* (1998), is also indebted to Kelley, and like Kelley Durant has little faith in any cure but much interest in the complications.

Durant has also plumbed different aspects of the late 1960's and early '70's: advanced art, rock culture, civil-rights struggles. Often signs of these things erupt together in the space of his art (which sometimes can recall the pop melange on "VH1"); and yet, again, as they do so, they also become entropic there —a process that fascinates Durant as much as it did Smithson. In two sculptures based on his *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970), for example, Durant positions Smithson as a key to both utopian and dystopian aspects of the Viet Nam War years; in these works associations with both a transgressive art and an oppressive state, allusions to both Woodstock and Alta-mont, meet and mix. Different terms converge, opposite numbers blur, in a devolution of politics and cultures. In his own words, Durant likes to "set up a false dialectic [that] doesn't work or [that] negates itself" Perhaps he suggests that the dialectic at large, not only in art but in history, seems to falter at this time, and that today we are left, in a state of stalled relativism, with pieces without a puzzle (perhaps —I don't know— he relishes this predicament.) In any case, where Dean sometimes extracts a utopian dimension from the recent past, Durant often traces an entropic collapse.

Let me end abruptly with a few theses that I have time enough only to assert, not to argue:

I. For the most part the archives in this an are not presented as inert: in this respect its upshot differs from "the Egyptian effect" that the Italian critic Mario Pemiola sees, rightly, in so much postmodernist pastiche. Rather, as suggested, these archives tend to ramify like a material unconscious of aleatory connections and disconnections, condensations and displacements. Once more, this might reveal how any archive functions: perhaps, to different degrees, archival work is always a matter of metonymic displacements among documents in search of metaphorical condensations in theory. Are we not all archivists more or less in the position of Bouvard and Pecucher, who, each time they descend into archive hell, struggle to turn mere bric-a-brac into a coherent library-museum, hopelessly so since the latter is always already in epistemological flames or ruins or both? In any case, as any

dissertation reader or contemporary museum-goer knows, there is often a fine line between a thesis and a mess, or a total work of an and a total piece of shit.

2. Speaking of shit, archival art can have a childish aspect, even an infantile dimension. Sometimes installation art in general suggests a kind of anal universe in guises either aggressive and explosive (as with Durant and Hirschhorn) or retentive and immaculate (as with Dean and Gillick). I mentioned that these artists occasionally use the non-hierarchical spatiality of installation to advantage. For Freud the anal universe is one of great symbolic slippage, which also describes some archival art with its characteristic assemblage of "unlikely connections" (as Durant calls them). I apologize for the psychoanalytical projection (I suppose one must these days), but the work invites it. Often it does appear a little obsessive-compulsive and/or manic-depressive. (This swing is also apparent in archival fiction, from the depressive Sebald to the manic David Foster Wallace or Dave Eggers.)

3. Often too this work is more than a little paranoid, for what is paranoia if not a practice of "unlikely connections," of elaborate auto-didacticism, of "my own private archive" put on display? To what ends are these paranoid connections made? Do these private archives want to challenge the public ones? Do these perverse orders want to contest the symbolic order at large? Or do they point to a crisis in this general law? For Freud the paranoiac projects meaning onto a world that appears drained of the same. Might archival art emerge out of similar sense of a failure in cultural memory, of a default in productive traditions of all kinds? For why else would one connect so feverishly if things did not seem so frightfully disconnected in the first place? "Only connect," the modernist poet said. But this was said at a time when "connection" meant connection to a Great Tradition about to crumble, to become, as The Wasteland put it, but "a heap of images." Today "connection" might have another valence altogether: it might mean to be wired to the mega-archive of the Web (here I mean "archive" also in the Foucauldian sense of surveillance). Are we not all encouraged to be connected in this way? It is now a basic ticket to the social. And yet perhaps, as K.W.

Jeter suggests in his sci-fi novel *Noir*, to be connected in this way is also, potentially, to be screwed. "Connect this," his protagonist likes to say, "you mother-connector." Here to be connected is to be flicked. Perhaps a similar ambivalence about "connection" is also in play in some archival art.

4. The archives in this art are in process, not repositories of finished works so much as platforms of incomplete projects. In this regard they are places of preliminary production, not (pace Bourriaud) of "post-production": Hirschhorn, for example, calls his exhibitions "construction sites." Herein lies perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of archival art: its desire to turn "failed visions" of the past (as Dean calls them) into "scenarios" (as Gillick calls them) of other social relations, of alternative futures, in short, to turn the no-place of the archive into the no-place of utopian possibility. Might we welcome this move as a small counter to the new myth of the United States after 9/11, of trauma monumentalized as triumphalism, of the Triumph of the Wound? Might the Sam Durants of the world be taken to challenge the Daniel Libeskind of our time?

5. Paradoxically, the interest in utopia is sometimes bound up with an involvement with the outmoded —a term that Benjamin first introduced in reference to the Surrealists. "Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie," Benjamin wrote in his *Arcades Project*. "But only Surrealism exposed them to view. The development of the forces of production reduced the wish symbols of the previous century to rubble even before the monuments representing them had crumbled." The "wish symbols" in question here were the capitalist wonders of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie at the height of its confidence, such as "the arcades and interiors, the exhibitions and panoramas." These structures fascinated the Surrealists nearly a century later, when further capitalist development had turned them into "residues of a dream world" or, again, "rubble even before the monuments which represented them had crumbled." For the Surrealists to haunt these outmoded spaces, according to Benjamin, was to tap "the revolutionary energies" that were trapped there. The outmoded for

archival artists today does not possess anything like this same force; in fact some are conflicted about the pasts that they unearth. And yet even so there are intimations of hope here, or at least of desire for a different future, a desire to turn belatedness into becomingness. In any case, there is a totally unexpected reclamation of this once despised aspect of the modernist project, its utopianism (so often condemned, still by many today, as so much will to power, so much totalitarianism, so much Gulag). This deployment of the outmoded might be a weak critique, but at least it can still query the totalistic assumptions of capitalist culture, never more grandiose than today; it can also remind this culture of its own wish symbols, its own forfeited dreams, its own better politics.

Finally a few stray questions to leave open for future reflection. How does "the archival impulse" relate to "the allegorical impulse" that Craig Owens posited twenty years ago as fundamental to postmodernist art? Its utopian aspect is one difference. How does it differ from the "anomic" deployment of archival materials that Benjamin Buchloh has underscored in the work of Gerhard Richter and others? The archives here are not without rule or order; again, if anything they attempt to forge new kinds of association, new principles of construction. How, lastly, does the archival impulse relate to the "fever" that Jacques Derrida detects in archives in general? Perhaps, like the Library of Alexandria, any archive is founded on disaster (or its threat), pledged against a ruin that it cannot forestall forever. But for Derrida the fever of the archive is more profound, a kind of death drive, and perhaps for all its desire for construction archival art has a destructive side as well.