III. MATERIALITIES

THE ARCHIVE OF THE DANISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION.
COURTESY: DANMARKS RADIOS ARKIV AF DRS KULTURARVSPROJEKT

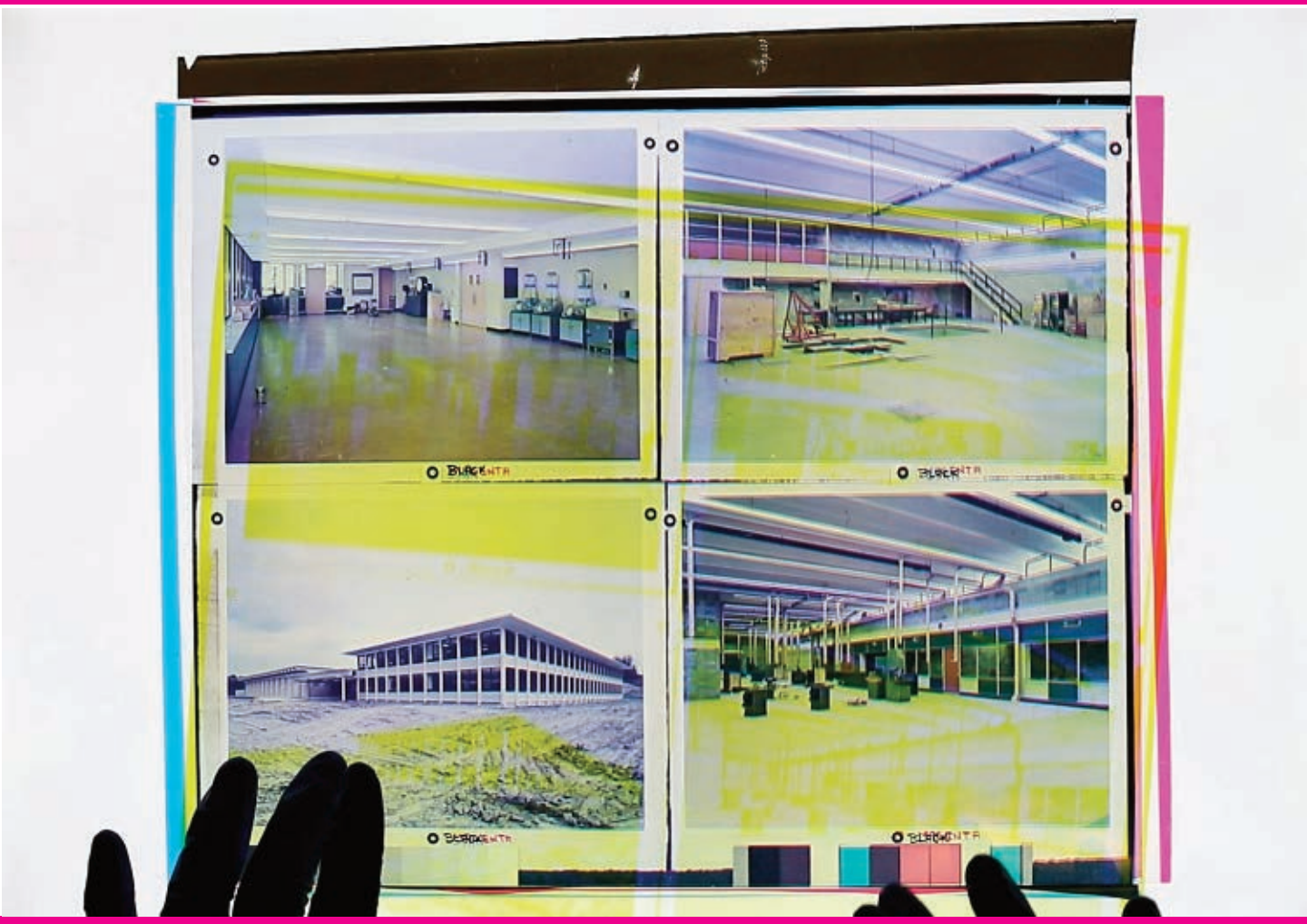

FIG. 1 Video still, from two-channel video projection. *Residue: Proximal Interactions.* 4'30" loop. 2017. Figure by authors.

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FUGITIVES:

Anarchival Materiality in Archives

Introduction: Anarchival Materiality

IN HIS 1984 *Distinguished Lecture: Anti Anti Relativism*, Clifford Geertz writes that it is uncertainty, rather than certainty, that tells us what it is to be human.[1] Writing of the importance of "wayward phenomena" such as "orbital leaps and wave packets" and "odd actualities—infant betrothals and non illusionist paintings—(that) embarrassed their categories"[2], Geertz argued for a worldview that keeps the world off-balance. In Anna Tsing's writing about the devastation of "blasted landscapes," life is made possible through uncertainty and unpredictability.[3] In her study of matsutake mushrooms growing in human-disturbed forests after intensive logging practices, Tsing argues for emergent multispecies worlds living together that do not assume the forward march of progress.[4] Instead, she advocates for the transformative power of unpredictable encounters, asking "what if… precarity *is* the condition of our time—or, to put it in another way, what if our time is ripe for sensing precarity? What if precarity, indeterminancy, and what we imagine as trivial are at the centre of the systematicity we seek?"[5] In another examination of how agency is circulated through human and non-human worlds, Vanessa Watts reaffirms a connection between place, non-humans, and humans.[6] Watt argues for Indigenous place-thought that "means that non-human beings choose how they reside, interact and develop relationships with other non-humans. So, all elements of nature possess agency, and this agency is not limited to innate action or causal relationships."[7]

The project at the heart of this paper locates agency in what we call anarchival materiality. It was inspired by one "odd actuality" that we encountered while doing research at Chicago's Field Museum in 2013. While handling Northwest Coast pastel drawings collected in anticipation of the 1893 World's Fair, we encountered an oily imprint of one drawing embedded in the manila folder that had contained it for more than a century. We stared at it, entranced. We took a photograph (see Fig. 2) and began to imagine other lively activities and chemical reactions that objects in archives might be initiating against the will of archivists and the order of the archive itself. If the archive has functioned broadly to support an impression of permanence and stability, how might these uncooperative archival residents and their ghostly impressions signal the precarity of impermanence and instability? Could documenting these unwieldy transformations provide new insight into the archive, its structures, and its counter-structures? In our work together over the last several years, we came to understand that through defiance of the categories and classifications that human stewards have created to organize and contain objects in the archive, these material transformations are initiating new forms of association. These transformations—visible evidence of entropy—may also function to mark that object as *anarchival*, or marked for destruction.

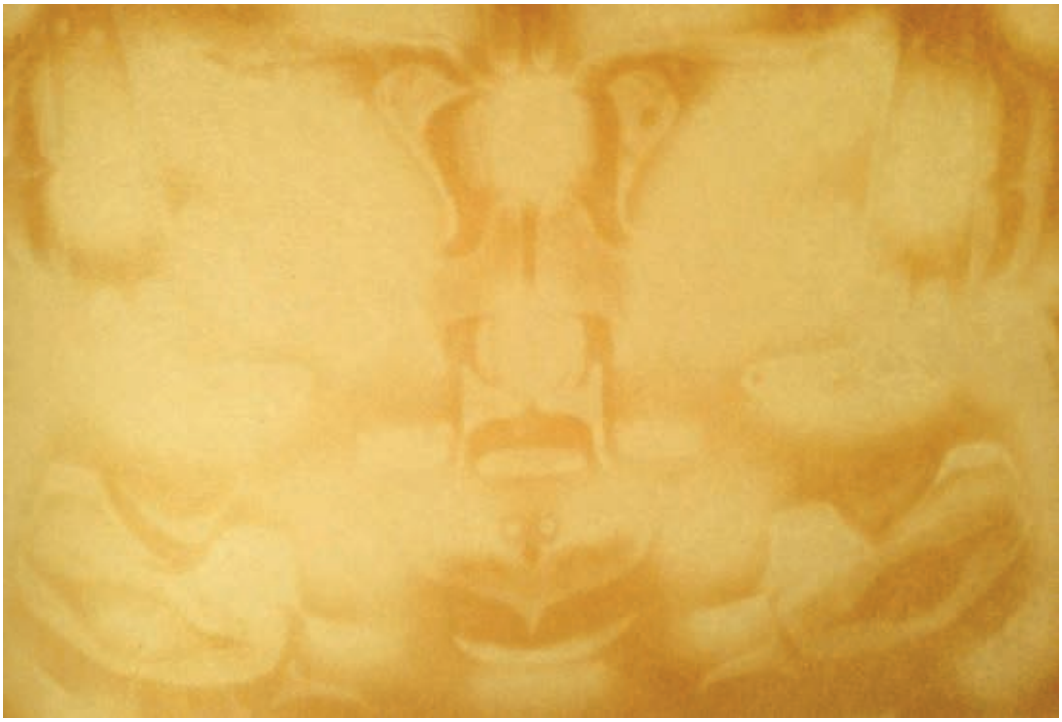

FIG. 2 Chicago Field Museum, Colour Photograph. 2013. Figure by authors.

In analog and digital archives alike, issues of material loss and corruption are conventionally met with tools of resistance, from simple freezers aimed at halting the progression of deterioration, to fire-resistant bunkers built to contain explosive chemical reactions, to complex robotic systems designed to detect and recreate files gone bad.[8] While entropy is generally resisted by archivists and conservators, we draw attention here to what we call *anarchival materiality*, or the generative force of entropy in archives. In this paper, we theorize anarchival materiality through our oral history work and parallel video and photography work in the British Columbia Provincial Archives, showing how anarchival materiality is a powerfully more than human force within archival worlds. What co-constitutive relationships can be made more discernable by following odd actualities and wayward phenomena in archives?

In particular, we focus our discussion on the anarchival force of molecular transformation, chemical reactions, rot, and other proximal interactions as they render archival materials as *fugitives*, eluding preservation. Using the photographs of fugitive objects and a video that we created as expressions of our research, we describe how the anarchival properties of archives signal dynamic, relational forms of care that we have with things and the structures of memory that they provoke. We suggest that fleshing out relationships between the materiality of things and their human caregivers can provide a better understanding of uncertainty and precarity as vital forces in archives. We explore the material agency of more than human archives to inquire how anarchival properties of archives reveal "sensuous enchantment"[9] between humans and their worlds.

Anarchival materiality has a shape and smell. It is a stack of orphan wallets, a live bullet, the pungent smell of 'vinegar syndrome' marking molecular transformation and loss of archival stability, the activity of cyan and yellow fading from motion-picture film stock, or nitrate negatives that have transformed into gooey interleaving between other photographic objects. Entropy is the generative force of things breaking down on their way to becoming other things. To understand uncertainty in archival worlds, we look to their materials. Archives are ripe with the disruptive force of materials—*anarchival materiality.*

Anthropology, Art, Materialisms

The work presented in this paper sits in the often uncomfortable zone between anthropology and art practice.[10] The location of this work—in a bureaucratic archive—and our particular focus on anarchival materiality cut across anthropological and artistic interests. It is understood in both anthropology and in art practice that the archive holds a "precarious position between order and chaos"[11] while being central in the creation and maintenance of nation states.[12] Artists appropriate and disrupt the material formations of archives—drawers, file folders, naming systems, photography, and film—to respond to the objectification, fetishization, and limits of institutions, memory, the past, and objects.[13]

The material indeterminancy of the archive is central in art theorist Hal Foster's location of an archival impulse in contemporary artworlds.[14] However, Foster suggests *anarchival* might be a more precise term for this impulse, privileging idiosyncratic probing, unfulfilled beginnings, and incomplete projects. Picking up on the anarchival impulse a decade later, in a recent issue of *Mnemoscape*, the editors consider the oppositional energies of fluidity, destruction, and subversion within art to challenge linear narratives and to reveal political injustices and ecological disaster.[15] In keeping with this thinking, art historian and critic Simone Ostoff asserts that contemporary artists, critics and curators are disrupting representation through performances "in, with, and of the archive... producing an ontological change—from the archive as a repository of documents to the archive as a dynamic and generative production tool."[16] Anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards finds archives "ambiguously dynamic" as materiality entangled in active social relations,[17] while anthropologist Celeste Pedri-Spade considers the relational power of archival materiality when situated within the context of de-colonial praxis.[18]

Our consideration of the entropic force of archives enables us to see archives as organized through more than human power and how archivists, curators, conservators, researchers, and visitors to archives are enmeshed in fluid and unpredictable worlds. The importance and specificity of these relationships can be recognized through attention to the material properties of things, or *vibrant matter*, what political theorist Jane Bennett names the capacity of things to act as forces.[19] In exploration of vital materialism, or the "active role of *nonhuman* materials in public life,"[20] Bennett provides a voice to thing-power, one that attempts to account for a shimmering and energetic vitality inside of things. STS scholar Karen Barad warns that within these "new materialisms," it is important not to fall into replicating the same flat world of objective representation but to privilege dependency between things. Barad advocates for an agential realist ontology, "a relationality between specific material (re)configuring of the world through which boundaries, properties and meanings are differently enacted."[21] A primary ontological unit Barad draws upon is phenomena, a mutual "entanglement of intra-acting agencies."[22] An important part of Barad's ontology is to

advocate for *intra* (from within) rather than *inter* (from outside, independent). *Intra-action* is co-constitutive, relational, and dependent.

However, as Zoe Todd has clearly articulated, the ontological turn has perpetuated a Eurocentric view of materiality by ignoring Indigenous world views that have long articulated how the non-human acts as a force upon human experience.[23] The structures and policies that govern the organization of and access to colonial museums and archives have amplified Eurocentric perspectives that continue to support policies of dispossession and violence. Fraser and Todd argue that it is "essential that we continue to recognise [sic] archival spaces, especially state archives, for their original intent: to create national narratives that seek to legitimise [sic] the nation state by excluding Indigenous voices, bodies, economies, histories, and socio-political structures."[24]

For example, recent critical curatorial work, such as that described by curator Jordan Wilson in the context of the Museum of Anthropology and the University of British Columbia's 2015 exhibition *c̓əsnaʔəm: the city before the city*, draws attention to the ethnographic museum and collecting practices as complicit in colonial oppression. However, in emphasizing an Indigenous articulation of material belongings as central to cultural continuity, Wilson describes how the Musqueam community's use of the term "belonging" in place of "artefact" or "object" in the exhibition went beyond reclamation of cultural property in museum and archaeological collections to express the ways in which Musqueam people have maintained a knowledge-relationship with belongings over time:

> The use of the term [belongings] emphasizes the contemporary Musqueam connection to the tangible things themselves, but it also conveys that Musqueam have always been the carriers of these belongings' intangible qualities, including knowledge about the power they continue to hold, how they should be cared for, what should be said about them, how they should be presented (if at all), and how they fit into our ways of seeing the world.[25]

Archives are very much of the more than human world. Their materiality and relationality is a constant reminder of this, and their power to disturb the structure of the archive is visible if looked for. Some of the earliest and most important documents are written on vellum and parchment, writing materials that were made from animal skins like calf and sheep. Conservators we spoke to told stories of working to keep the document pages from curling themselves back towards the bodies they came from. At the heart of all archives lies this curl: the agential force of matter. These practices of care by curators, conservators, archivists and others are relational acts of shepherding materials through these constant states of change, revealing a significant tension between the charge of preservation of archival materiality and acknowledgement of the fugitive nature of almost all things. In this thinking, archives are not outside of us, not of the past or for the future. Rather, they run alongside and in relationship with living beings.

Fugitives

Non-human archives and their human stewards both constrain and enable preservation. Classification systems, spatial organization, and human responsibilities are all fundamentally reshaped and determined by the uncooperative residents of archives who constantly remind their caretakers of the

FIG. 3 Fugitives in the British Columbia Provincial Archives. Colour Photograph. Dimensions variable. 2017. Figure by authors.

transformative and organic passage of time. Care is a foundational principle in the work of the archive—indeed, "care begins when difference is recognized."[26] In their introduction to care practices, Annemarie Mol, Ingunn Moser, and Jeannette Pols describe what they consider good care, practices of "persistent tinkering," that changes what it is to be human:

> Care practices move us away from rationalist versions of the human being. For rather than insisting on cognitive operations, they involve embodied practices. Rather than requiring impartial judgements and firm decisions, they demand attuned attentiveness and adaptive tinkering. Crucially, in care practices what it is to be human has more to do with being fragile than with mastering the world.[27]

In our research, which included oral history interviews, the concept of the *fugitive* arose as a way to understand aspects of anarchival materiality present in the British Columbia Archives. Fugitivity is one form of anarchival materiality that helps us to explore alternate organizations within, and understandings of, archives. The fugitive makes action or movement in archives visible. The word fugitive is both an adjective and a noun—it is *apt or tending to flee*, both the slippery feeling of something escaping or eluding the grasp, and one who is driven out, banished, or exiled. In the archive, an object is made fugitive in a number of ways. An object can become fugitive if it is (1) deemed to exist outside of the logic of the archive—*exiled*—an orphan without provenance or documentation (see: Fig. 4), or (2) an *anomaly* with provenance or material composition that poses a threat to the archive or archivist itself (see: Figs. 5 and 6). It can *become* fugitive if (3) the archivist determines that it is no

longer of *value*, and therefore anarchival, and in the same turn can be made archival again if new value is attached to it (see: Fig. 7). It can also (4) become fugitive by nature of its inevitable *material transformation*, so that it literally cannot be preserved (see: Figs. 8 and 9).

What makes the object *fugitive* rather than garbage is that while the fugitive object is marked for destruction, the object may remain in or adjacent to the archive (on a shelf, on an archivist's desk) because of its ongoing relationship of care with people who work in archives. There is a particular quality of certain things in archives that grab the attention of the archivist. Jane Bennett calls this sort of relationship "thing-power."[28] Bennett cites WJT Mitchell's "What Do Pictures Want?" to make sense of this power:

> … objects are the way things appear to a subject—that is, with a name, an identity, a gestalt or stereotypical template…. Things, on the other hand… [signal] the moment when the object becomes the Other, when the sardine can looks back, when the mute idol speaks, when the subject experiences the object as uncanny and feels the need for what Foucault calls "a metaphysical of the object, or, more exactly, a metaphysics of that never objectifiable depth from which objects rise up toward our superficial knowledge."[29]

In the British Columbia Provincial Archive, archivist Ann ten Cate and preservation manager Ember Lundgren walked us through the stacks, leading us to fugitive objects that had exercised thing-power in the course of their careers. We gathered these fugitives and brought them to a makeshift photography studio that we created adjacent to the public archival research room (see Fig. 2). We later interviewed ten Cate about the fugitives she had chosen and looked together at the photographs we had made. In the remainder of this article, we present a selection of our portraits as generative illustrations of the mutable concept of the fugitive. We conclude by describing a two-channel video work that we used as a method to advance our own understanding of fugitiveness and its work as lively, anarchival materiality in archives. How might fugitives within archival structures, and the chemical reactions that create them, reveal transformative potentials in entropy?

Fugitives as Exiles

Archival objects can be made fugitive when they are exiled from the archival order. This archival order is both maintained by human agents and reinforced by the inertia of historical systems of classification and care. Most fugitives do not linger in the archive—they are identified, deaccessioned and destroyed. However, some exercise thing-power and remain present, alongside the archive, which is where we collected them to be photographed. Additionally, as we show here, while human stewards make decisions that cast objects as fugitive, this fugitivity can be reversed when new "regimes of value"[30] are re-attached to the object.

1. The Wallets

A pile of wallets was collected over many decades and sat, disorderly, on a shelf at one end of the archive. Orphaned from their associated files, Ann ten Cate told us that "...some of these are the last possessions of someone who died in British Columbia, intestate, no will, no relatives, nothing, so the

government took over administration of these items, and so we have these sad, little collections."[31] The wallets signal the shape of the bodies that they were carried on, transformed through physical interactions. ten Cate continued: "They're like last remains to me in a way… the physical body has long gone, but what you're left with are very personal and intimate notes, photographs of their relatives."[32] Disconnected from archival documentation, they are rendered fugitives both by their anarchival status and by the will of archivists to keep them as powerful and intimate reminders of life and death. Their existence is precarious—the wallets are wayward possessions with an uncertain past and future:

FIG. 4 *Fugitives: Wallets I.* Colour Photograph. Dimensions variable. 2017. Figure by authors.

> We don't really know what to do with it, so this material has hung in the balance for the last, probably, 40 years. It would have been taken out by an archivist as they were processing these court case files, and they would have looked at it and gone, now what do I do with this, but this stuff is so unique and so interesting, I feel like I want to just keep it as a little collection of exhibits, so it has never been officially recognized as part of the archival record.[33]

Fugitives as Anomalies

2. Simon Gunanoot's Bullets

FIG. 5 *Fugitives: Bullet I.* Colour Photograph. Dimensions variable. 2017. Figure by authors.

FIG. 6 *Fugitives: Bullet II.* Colour Photograph. Dimensions variable. 2017. Figure by authors.

As we worked in our temporary photo studio in the Provincial Archive, Ann ten Cate stepped in to check in our progress. "Would you be interested in a live bullet?" she asked. "Yes!" we replied in unison. The resulting photographs, *Bullet I* and *Bullet II,* are fugitive anomalies in the files associated with the infamous story and court case of Simon Gunanoot. Born in 1874, his mother was a Gitksan Chief of the Fireweed Clan, and his father, Nah Gun, a hereditary Chief of the Frog Clan. A prosperous merchant with a store in Kispiox, Gunanoot himself became a fugitive when he, along with his

brother in law, became entangled in a fight at a tavern in Hazelton. When the two men with whom Gunanoot had fought were later found shot dead, a warrant was issued for his arrest. A three-year manhunt ensued, but "Gunanoot led a successful life on the trail, travelling from town to town to avoid detection. Friends welcomed him at every stop, and his children learned how to live in the wild."[34] After 13 years, he gave himself up and hired a prominent criminal lawyer. However, public opinion towards Gunanoot changed over time. Once-racist newspaper headlines reversed their opinion to help transform Gunanoot into a hero.[35] He became a "symbol of unrest in Canada in the early 1900s"[36] and was found not-guilty of the charges. With the court case finished, the files were eventually moved to The BC Archives.

In addition to court documents, Simon Gunanoot's file included some forensic evidence: two bullets in an envelope labelled in neat, cursive handwriting. The photograph, "Bullet I" shows fragments of bullets that were fired and presumably extracted from the dead men's bodies. "Bullet II" is a photograph of a bullet cartridge that was never fired, remaining alive, now a potential threat to the physical integrity of the archive. Like Gunanoot, the bullets are fugitives because they are unstable, in-between. They are fugitives, first existing as fragments outside of the order of the colonial archive, and second as problematic to preserve in the context of its particular history. The live bullet, in particular, represents the latent possibility of violence in the archive, a notion only amplified by its historical significance as material evidence of colonial conflict. The fugitive bullets are an integral part part of the record, yet their thing-power is in tension with normative procedures for archival preservation. Simon Gunanoot's bullets provide insight into the ways in which human stewards in the colonial archive make decisions about what is archival, anarchival, and fugitive. According to Ann ten Cate,

> Eventually, the curator who had the most knowledge said I don't actually know how to take apart a bullet to make it safe, I'm worried about how we would actually physically manage this object, even if it was in a secure lockup, so maybe we should just photograph it and destroy it, end of story, but I felt, and so did many of the other archivists, that this is one of those items that has so much artifactual value that you want to keep it as an artifact.
>
> … There was this interesting dynamic going on, professionally, between all these colleagues. Conservators, that's a nightmare, get it out of there. Security, no, we can't have unexploded shells in the collection, you got to get it out of there. Curators, oh, it's going to be too much.
>
> … It's one of those cases where you just can't come to a consensus, and perhaps the best thing for that bullet is for it just to lay sleepily in its file for another 50, 60 years, before somebody else realizes we have an unexploded bullet.[37]

Fugitives as Mutable

3. The Trapline Records

The mutable nature of fugitives in archives can be discerned in their potential for reversal. *Trapline Records I* is a box containing files that was in the collection of the Fish and Wildlife Branch of the British Columbia Government in the northern city of Prince George. It contains significant correspon-

dence between an Indian Agent and the Canadian government arguing that Haida trappers had long established trapping rights in their territory, and that these territories should not be given over to settlers. In the story we heard from Ann ten Cate, these records had been deemed anarchival—they were lying on a loading dock ready to be sent to the dump when an observant individual (identified to us by Ann ten Cate as Dr. Douglas Hudson, a professor at the University College of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia), walked by and noticed them. ten Cate explains:

FIG. 7 *Fugitives: Trapline Records I.* Colour Photograph. Dimensions variable. 2017. Figure by authors.

> Their very existence was predicated on the fact that, in the case of the trapline records, somebody recognized these items at the dump, someone who wasn't even an archivist, an historian, and who said, wait a minute, I think perhaps that these should be rescued, and that the archives needs to be notified about them, so that's how those came into our possession. They were on a course for destruction, so they were destined to be a completely fugitive record, if we want to use it in that sense, and yet now have become a permanent part of our collection.[38]

Central to this condition of fugitivity—the slippery quality of "new regimes of value"[39] taking hold—is the specificity of human care. Rescuing the trapline records from destruction requires "attuned attentiveness,"[40] an orientation ripe with the unpredictability of contingency and response. These actions are counter to "impartial judgement" that "does not imply a docile acceptance of fate; care is active, it seeks to improve life."[41] Things that are unvalued are reformed by practices of care into valuable records. The trapline records hold value in ongoing, unresolved land and Aboriginal treaty rights in British Columbia.

Fugitives as Material Transformation

4. Nitrate Negatives (I and II) and Vinegar Syndrome

One constant in bureaucratic archives around the world is that things are in continual processes of forming and reforming. One of the most visible examples of impermanence is found in the fugitive materiality of cellulose nitrate materials. Fugitive by nature of inevitable material transformation, nitrate negatives cross thresholds, make odd connections, and provide spectacular evidence of the vibrant changing force of one thing becoming another in archives.

Developed is the 1880s as a flexible (plastic) film support for photographic materials by Eastman Kodak, cellulose nitrate was widely used through the early 1950s.[42] Nitrate is extremely volatile because the material is flammable. Similar to the chemical makeup of guncotton, nitrate decomposes into a flammable gas to eventually become dust. It is a notorious material in film and urban history for starting fires in the projection rooms of movie houses. It is a particularly vigorous

FIG. 8 *Fugitives: Nitrate Negatives I*. Colour Photograph. Variable Dimensions. 2017. Figure by authors.

FIG. 9 *Fugitives: Nitrate Negatives II*. Colour Photograph. Variable Dimensions. 2017. Figure by authors.

changeling within collections of photographic images. Like Simon Gunanoot's bullet, nitrate film in archives represents violent potential in entropy.

Human caregivers are obliged to separate nitrate in a measure to prevent contamination to other parts of the archives. Conservators and archivists discern nitrate through knowing a file's history and through hunch, touch, and smell. While most nitrate materials in collection of The BC Archives are stored in on and off-site freezers to slow the process of degradation, preservation manager Ember Lundgren provided us with examples that attest to the lively properties of nitrate. While we determined which images to photograph, Ember carefully handled the materials, resting the plate in her gloved palm and gently tipping and rotating her wrist, using raking light to map textures that reveal contamination.

Nitrate Negatives I is a stack of fused glass plates and nitrate negatives showing plastic negatives curving and arching against glass plates. A form of proximal interaction, the negatives are not only

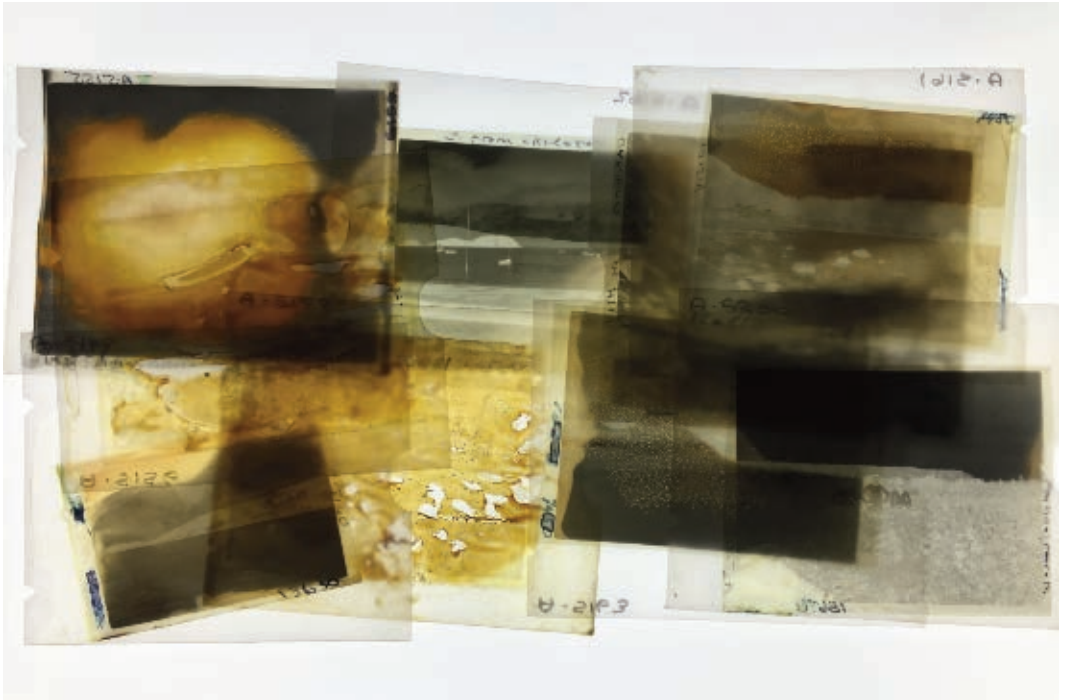

FIG. 10 Fugitives: Vinegar syndrome. Colour Photograph. Variable Dimensions. 2017. Figure by authors.

fused to one another, but are fusing with the detritus of human and non-human occupants of the archive. *Nitrate Negatives I* picks up the thread, hair, and paper fragments that fuse into an array. No longer a stack of individual photo-based indexes of the past, the block is a reminder that enabling photographs is lively, and photographs, like memories they intend to imprint, are malleable.

Anarchival materiality in photographic archives is the reconstitution of relationships. The glass plate negative visible in *Nitrate Negatives I* reveals two people temporarily standing together in place. Due to chemical reactions, the negative is experiencing oxidation, or the process through which silver moves and seems to fade via migrations within the image from one area to another. Silver particles are brilliantly re-figuring themselves, drawing from the density of a white shirt sleeve, the sun across a roofline, and the brightness of a hat. The silver is gathering into the centre of the glass, temporarily rearranged.

Reminding us of the impermanence of all things, the indexical nature of *Nitrate Negatives II* has been subsumed by the entropy of nitrate cellulose. Wearing protective gloves, Ember demonstrated for us the unstable nature of nitrate and acetate decomposition by carefully lifting the edge of a flake of negative. As it curled slowly back into place, nitrate anarchival materiality comes through the reminder that negatives—images of people, places, and events—transform into qualities of gooey, fused, slumpy, and flaky. *Nitrate Negatives II* eluded preservation and now there is barely a suggestion of what we might expect of photography here (it is all gooey properties, not indexical images). The autocatalytic nature of cellulose nitrate and acetate means that once the process of deterioration has

begun, new properties are generated by the degradation, and these new properties create further degradation.[43] The process is unpredictable. In this way, the entropic force of the archive is clear, and, like a prison break, the autocatalytic process triggers fugitivity in nearby materials.

In the book, *Dust*, Carolyn Steedman outlines a way of thinking about unstable boundaries between the archive and the self.[44] The embodiment of historians doing their work includes breathing in the archive. Bending over a book, particles of what lies within the pages of books—or the materialities of the books themselves—are inhaled. The breath activates the "the malignant, eternal dust of the Archive."[45] Steedman writes about the liveliness in that dust, the potential for sickness in the historian who inhales "the dust of the animals and plants that provided material for the documents … untied and read; the dust of all the workers whose trials and tribulations in labour formed their paper and parchment."[46]

Steedman provides a way into thinking about the epidemiology of archives, connecting the cycle of breath and air and disturbance to archives and the work of historians. The liveliness of the archives we worked with extended to their circulation in the air. The discernment of "vinegar syndrome" (Fig. 10) comes through the tangy smell of vinegar. Documents outlining care of black and white materials explain that the process dubbed vinegar syndrome is the chemical breakdown of the cellulose acetate itself, a chemical reaction that produces acetic acid.[47] For conservators, it is the quality of scent that signal the fugitive nature of the material, "the smell of vinegar near ageing acetate films is an indication of the beginning of chemical conservation."[48] As we walked the stacks, Ember Lundgren was on alert for contamination through her sense of smell.

Ann ten Cate explains their multisensory natures: "We think of them as 2D, but they really are 3D. A piece of paper is three dimensional, it's a very tactile experience to touch and smell, and just know that that record carries with it the dust and the must."[49] Photographing the materials, we could smell the acidic sour of their fugitive nature and feel a sting in the back of our throats. One aspect of sensing archives is found in the taste of the archive that reminded us that the archive itself is breathing, it's letting certain things go, into the air. These pass through our bodies, they pass over and through other documents, things, onto gloves and tables, and escape through the controlled air circulation system. The taste and smell of archives is underlined by a mild feeling of fear of contamination and its potential consequences. The blue nitrile gloves we wore to handle things offered only small comfort.

Proximal Interactions

In another consideration of contamination in archives, art critic and historian Simone Ostoff cites the role of contamination between artwork and documentation that acts to change the archive's ontology from stable representation to dynamic and performative production tool.[50] She positions history, theory, and art, in "continuous relays [thus] ...suggesting that history and theory can, at least on occasion, function as dynamic media."[51] She asks, "When artists employ historical archives as media is history affected?"[52] She believes it is, that archive as artwork "challenges the notion of history as a discourse based primarily upon chronology and documentation—no longer presupposes a stable and retroactive archive, but often a generative one."[53] In our research, we sought to understand anarchival materiality in archives through research-creation, an activity that privileges contamination, or, the "interpenetration of processes" between art practice and theoretical research.[54]

FIGs. 11–13 Video stills from two-channel video projection. *Residue: Proximal Interactions.* 4'30" loop 2017. Figures by authors.

Our artwork, *Proximal Interactions*, is a two-channel video. On the left, gloved hands layer four-colour separations documenting bureaucratic structures. The action of layering imitates the ephemerality of colour in film and photography archives where deterioration of acetate and nitrate negatives and colour fading challenge and shape archival ordering. On the right, the order of the archive is re-worked through the formal properties of ruby-lith (a masking film used in orthochromatic printing as a way to block information), and the gooeyness of deteriorating acetate negatives.

We used the archive as a generative place not only for our hypothesis about anarchival materiality but also to theorize and generate new ordering for archives. While archives are normally ordered via a person or subject, we were interested in highlighting the potential for archival ordering through hue, tone, colour, or legibility. Using materials that Ember and Ann brought to us in our makeshift studio, *Proximal Interactions* highlights new associations. We were trying to establish new orders as we filmed and the choreography was unplanned. This process highlights contingency and response. We wanted to foreground our interest in the unexpected.

Mining potential in entropy, we were interested in undermining the colonial archive by documenting the way anarchival materiality can work. We took turns experimenting with laying out the materials and creating new associations. For example, we used the shape and colour of ruby-lith, a masking materials used in black and white darkrooms to exclude information in a negative. We were interested in how ruby-lith obscures the supposed objectivity and reality of what the camera saw and so we highlighted it as a feature in the order of things. We were also interested in the visuality of ruby-lith and how it worked as a formal element within the video framing. What was previously a collection of boats on water was re-ordered into a series of horizontal ruby-lith lines, inverting and rotating images to privilege visual balance. In another part of the video, we order things according to the amount of deterioration. Jane Bennett highlights the importance of discerning the emergent causality of the world:

> In a world of lively matter, we see that biochemical and biochemical-social systems can sometimes unexpectedly bifurcate or choose developmental paths that could not have been forseen, for they are governed by an emergent rather than a linear or deterministic causality. And once we see this, we will need an alternative both to the idea of nature as a purposive, harmonious process and to the idea of nature as a blind mechanism.[55]

Conclusion

In this paper, we have theorized what we call anarchival materiality through our research creation work in the British Columbia Provincial Archives. In our photography and video project, we have attempted to show how anarchival materiality is a powerfully more-than-human force within archival worlds. In particular, we have presented the notion of the *fugitive* as an expression this idea. Fugitivity is one form of anarchival materiality that helps us to explore alternate organizations within—and understandings of—archives. The fugitive makes both human and non-human action in archives visible.

Following fugitive objects and their human caregivers in the archive, we have experimented with aesthetic forms to identify and picture co-constitutive relationships in the archive that foreground uncertainty over certainty and deterioration over preservation. Anarchival materialities are these

entropic forces of matter—the force of things curling, catching fire, melting, or escaping. It is the processes of always being in-between—things in the state of transmuting into something else. However, it is also the emergence of the new and unexpected. The archive is entropic, chaotic, and unpredictable. It is the action and movement of a world that will not settle down or play dead. While it is commonly understood that the intent of archives is to preserve documents deemed of value, it is the anarchival properties of archives—a set of relationships and processes—that shapes them. Anarchival materiality exceeds the order of things. It presents weird phenomena that throw a wrench into human desire for permanence and order. Anarchival materiality is a powerful reminder of the generative force of entropy in archives.

NOTES

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