

Subverting Archival Practices

Digital Archivables, Artistic Data and Curated Forms of Presentation: Archival Practices in the Performance-based Arts

Conference organized by the research project
“Subverting Archival Practices” in collaboration with documenta archiv

Thursday 7 – Saturday 9 May 2026 in Kassel

The international conference “Digital Archivables, Artistic Data and Curated Forms of Presentation: Archival Practices in the Performance-based Arts” will focus on questions of digital infrastructure and working methods in the context of self-organized community- and artist-driven archival practices. However, the internet as a workspace for artistic and curatorial projects is largely dominated by the platforms and software solutions of commercial tech companies and the power structures they implement through their algorithms and content management templates. In light of current political developments, these urgently need to be challenged. Non-institutional archival initiatives generally do not have the means to develop their own tools and infra-structures due to cost or interoperability issues or manpower and expertise. But which alternatives are available? And under which conditions? The conference is dialogic and invites representatives of six initiatives — **CHAKKARs, Performatorium, Akademie der Künste der Welt, Non-Aligned Dance Archive, re.act.feminism, touching margins** — to present and discuss their working methods with experts and activists.

With: Juana Awad, Dušan Barok, Sarah Bergh, Nanna Bonde Thylstrup, Barbara Büscher, Sandra Chatterjee, Anna Chwialkowska, Birgitta Coers, Franz Anton Cramer, Ulrike Hanstein, Olivia Jaques, Bettina Knaup, Melissa Köhler, Isabella Kraye, Jan Kryszons, Saskia Mattern, Shusha Niederberger, Birk Schindler, Marlies Surtmann, Jasmina Založnik

The research project “Subverting Archival Practices” is conducted by Barbara Büscher and Franz Anton Cramer at the University of Music and Theatre (HMT) Leipzig. It addresses individuals and initiatives in the field of dance, activism, curation and performance. Besides artistic studio work and various discursive formations, they operate in the digital realm for documenting, preserving/storing, and presenting material which has emerged from their respective practices. The relationship between the digital and the physical (and often private) realm, and between these and the institutional sphere, crucially impacts how the material is preserved, authenticated and made accessible.

Registration required at archiv@documenta.de

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Fridericianum | Auditorium
Friedrichsplatz 18, 34117 Kassel

Thursday, 7 May

17h30 Arrival, registration

18h30 Welcome

Keynote by Nanna Bonde Thylstrup: “From Shadow Libraries to
Training Data: Marginal Archives in the Age of Generative AI”

Friday, 8 May

09h30 Welcome and intro by convenors

10h00 Case Studies 1: Destabilizing Archival Processes
respondent: Dušan Barok

- Bettina Knaup
“Archival Chain Reactions – Between and beyond Archivo Pinto mi
Raya, re.act.feminism and City of Women”

- Anna Chwialkowska
“To Share or to Protect? Priorities and Possibilities of an Online
Alter-Archive”

- Dušan Barok
“Hosting a community of care”

12h00 Case Studies 2: Decolonizing Archival Narratives
respondent: Juana Awad

- Sarah Bergh and Sandra Chatterjee
“CHAKKARs – moving the archives. How to digitize decolonizing turns”

- Jan Kryszons
“Striking New Roots: Replanting the ADKDW Archive”

- Juana Awad
“After the Institution: The Werkstatt der Kulturen Archive and
Infrastructure as Power”

15h00 Birk Schindler
"From Artist Data to the Source Code and Back Again"

17h00 Guided tour of documenta archiv

Saturday, 9 May

09h30 Shusha Niederberger
"Beyond use. Inhabiting digital infrastructure"

11h30 Case Studies 3: Embodied Archivables & Digital Representations
respondent: Ulrike Hanstein

- Olivia Jaques and Marlies Surtmann
"Artist-Archivist. On the interplay between artistic-performative and archival practices"
- Jasmina Založnik
"(Non)Aligned Dance Archive – digital database and developing archive of contemporary dance and performative practices from the post-Yugoslavian region"
- Ulrike Hanstein
"Relocating and Recollecting Performance Art"

13h30 Case Studies 4: Collective self-archiving and institutionalisation

- Isabella Kraye
"Self-archiving as a collective process? A comparative analysis of *The Black Kit* (DE, 1981–) & *Revolving Histories* (CH, 2021–)"
- Birgitta Coers, Melissa Köhler, Saskia Mattern and Isabella Kraye
"(Collective) Self-archivization between artistic strategy and necessity: *The Black Kit & Revolving Histories*"

Conference concept: Barbara Büscher, Birgitta Coers, Franz Anton Cramer

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