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Relics of All Things Precious: Curiosity and Wonder in Artists' Collections

A dissertation submitted by

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Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis proposes that there are specific artists whose practices utilise a collecting methodology as a critical engagement with the world. It argues that even though these artists appear to fit into a museum/archive system, they actually sit parallel to this system. Furthermore, the strategies that they employ navigate the physical, conscious, and unconscious world, creating new directions in collecting to surpass historical models. Therein the thesis examines the misinterpretation of how artists' collections are situated within a museum or private collection system, proposing instead that these collections should be viewed as an artistic strategy and process for making sense of the world through the repositioning of found and collected objects.

This dissertation will focus primarily on the model of the *Wunderkammer*, as it represents a historical model of collecting that incorporates a vast array of intuitive and conceptual intentions that sit parallel to the traditional museum archive and collection system. It is within this framework that artists create collections that are concerned with aspects of curiosity, chance, wandering and discovery, which form the basis of their artwork. This strategy was first employed by early Modernist art movements such as Dada and Surrealism to approach the world in a new way, however, this thesis demonstrates that this strategy has become a significant concept in contemporary artistic practce, instrumental in the construction of artworks that challenge the historical, political, cultural, and social narratives that the archival structure provides.

Relics of All Things Precious proposes that collecting is a strategy employed by contemporary artists in the creation of artwork that seeks to make intuitive, marginal, subjective, forgotten, banal, and irrational experiences and events significant by engaging with the historical nature of the archive. These collections have a specific narrative function that represents a synthesis between collective and individual histories, sensible intuition and scientific inquiry, memory and amnesia, fact and fiction, and the material and immaterial. It is through these various strategies that artists interpret the world, creating new work from visual, conceptual, physical and emotional fragments, which in turn makes artists' collections different from more traditional and historical collecting models.

Acknowledgements

In memory of my father…

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Introduction

Relics of All Things Precious: Curiosity and Wonder in Artists' Collections

> The collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context. Like other forms of art, its function is not the restoration of context of origin but rather the creation of a new context, a context standing in a metaphorical, rather than a contiguous, relation to the world of everyday life.[1]

<u>Project description</u>

This dissertation proposes that with the advent of Modernism, the twentieth century gave rise to new ways of responding to contemporary environments and material production through the 'Readymade', collage and assemblage, all of which are strategies that specifically used images and objects sourced from the artist's location, heralding a collecting methodology that constituted an artwork rather than acting as an artist's source material. Using contemporary artists as examples, this dissertation will examine how the importance of the *objet trouvé* or found object within art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has contributed to the act of collecting within artistic practice as an art-making strategy that relies on 'sensible intuition' as well as the scientific/research enquiry that constitute traditional archives based upon French artist Marcel Duchamp's 'Readymades', Dadaist's and Surrealist's collages, American artists Robert Rauschenberg's and Joseph Cornell's assemblages, German artist Gerhard Richter's and American artist Andy Warhol's archives, and American artist Mark Dion's installations. It will further investigate the purpose of such collections within contemporary art by positioning the artist's collection as a methodology that translates how the artist sees, experiences, and engages with not only their own history but also the macrocosm of the world and its history. Specifically, it will focus on the collecting model of the fifteenth to eighteenth-century *Wunderkammer* or cabinet of curiosities which is characterised by

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[1] S Stewart, *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*, 9th edn, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2005, pp. 151 – 152.

heterogeneity, idiosyncrasy, singularities, and associations and the definition of the souvenir, as a memento or relic of a significant event, developed by seminal theorists, English museologist Susan Pearce and American literary theorist Susan Stewart. These models will provide a way to analyse artistic collections that are concerned with aspects of curiosity, chance, wandering (physical and mental meanderings) and discovery that represent the intuitive ways in which artists form collections. Considered together, these seminal concepts are instrumental in the construction and translation of meaning in artistic practices such as by English-American artist Susan Hiller, English artist Tacita Dean, and American artist Allen Ruppersberg, all of whom challenge the traditional historical, political, cultural and social narratives that the archival structure provides. The subjective, marginal and open-ended narratives that these artists engage within their collections blur the boundaries between memory and amnesia, fact and fiction, and the corporeal and psychological, creating and discovering new situations from available historical and physical material. As a result, *Relics of All Things Precious* proposes that through the collection these contemporary artists engage with this material, not as a way to make sense of the world but to expose the lack of sense inherent within humanity's understanding of the world and the poetic experience this engenders.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to contribute to discourses about the ways in which artists utilise collecting strategies within their work. This is significant due to the recent discourse about the use of the archive in contemporary art practice in publications such as *Archive Fever* by Okwui Enwezor (2008), *The Big Archive* by Sven Spieker (2008), and *The Archive: documents in contemporary art* edited by Charles Merewether (2006), and others, which all position artistic collecting strategies as historical, institutional, and cultural critiques that are engaged with documentation and data collection. Currently, this discourse is centred on a rather narrow definition of how artists utilise collections within their practice. The aim of *Relics of All Things Precious* is to expand upon this definition via examples of seminal artists who employ alternative collecting strategies, specifically the type of artistic collecting methodology that subverts traditional archival strategies by using the narrative structure of the archive to investigate intuitive, curious, anachronistic

and uncanny events. To this end, this introduction will discuss what constitutes a traditional collection, positioning artists' collections within this understanding, provide a historical background of artistic collections, review significant literature in the field of research, determine gaps in the current knowledge, define terms specific to this polemic, and outline the aim of each chapter.

Generalised understanding of the field – What is a Collection?

In his *Das Passegen-Werk*, under the file 'H – The Collector', German theorist Walter Benjamin noted, 'Animals (birds, ants), children, and old men as collectors'.[2] American art historian Douglas Crimp suggests that this statement is indicative of collecting as an innate biological mechanism, a *Sammeltrieb* or primal urge to collect.[3] If this is so, then what can be collected is potentially endless. Apart from antiquities and ethnographic artefacts, works of art and books, items such as mass produced objects and ephemera, kitsch, technological objects, clothing, perfumes, household items, furniture, *naturalia* (e.g. shells, corals, driftwood, crystals and stones), photographs, food, building materials, waste and more intangible things like information (census, databases), friends (Facebook), and experiences (travel) are all fodder for the collector's project. To this end it is possible for anything that can be accumulated to be collected.

However, in *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (1995), American cultural theorist Russell Belk recognises that this not necessarily so; there exists a difference between accumulation and collecting.[4] Rather than a mass accrual of items, collecting is 'the process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences'.[5] By this definition, while it is possible to accumulate anything, this accrual does not become a collection until it becomes part of a curated set. Furthermore, in order to unify the collection, this set must be housed in a singular location from concrete spaces such as a specialised cabinet, warehouse, or museum

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[2] W Benjamin, *The arcades project*, trans. H Eiland & K McLaughlin, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 211. This text is in itself a collection of quotations.
[3] D Crimp, *On the museum's ruins*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993, p. 201.
[4] R Belk, *Collecting in a consumer society*, Routledge, New York, 1995, pp. 66 – 68.
[5] ibid., p. 67.

(whether on display or in storage) to intangible sites such as Internet websites, data spaces, or the faculty of human memory. To any set of objects, regardless of their similarity or heterogeneity in relation to other items within the collection, there exists specific relationships and similarities that serve to contextualise and define the collection and boundaries that create guidelines as to what is to be collected. In this way the collection demonstrates a concept or meaning. Belk states,

> Collectors create, combine, classify, and curate the objects they acquire in such a way that a new product, the collection, emerges. In the process they also produce meanings. More precisely, they participate in the process of socially reconstructing shared meanings for the objects they collect.[6]

This act of production (of both a physical collection and a signified meaning) is important when understanding who collects and the purpose of their collections. Specifically, Belk's statement provides a significant insight into the function of an artist's collection since the 'collection' as a 'new product' can be seen to be synonymous with the contemporary work of art as a product of creation, combination, classification or curation. Moreover, Belk acknowledges that the production of meaning within a collection is determined by the relational nature between the collector and the objects collected. Most importantly Belk's statement implies that this relational meaning is also determined by a social, shared aspect, which is a central aspect of artistic practice.

German curator Mathias Winzen states in 'Collecting – so normal, so paradoxical' (1998), that artists' collections are different to other forms of collecting.[7] While the things artists collect are in many ways the same things that ordinary individuals, corporations, and institutions collect, just as they often share the same motivations for collecting, the purpose of an artist's collection differs. The product of an artistic collection is an artwork with a physical artefact and conceptual meaning, the function of which is to participate again within a collecting system, what American

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[6] ibid., p. 55.
[7] M Winzen, 'Collecting – so normal, so paradoxical', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing, and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, 1998, p. 22.

historian James Clifford refers to as the 'modern art-culture system'[8], whether through an individual's personal or an institution's historical collection. The artwork, rather than solely existing for the private pleasure of the artist (as so many personal collections do), is designed for an audience. So, through this process the artist engages with a broader historical and cultural context. To this end, artists produce a variety of collections that address differing formal, aesthetic, and conceptual concerns.

History of artists' collections

For the artist, collections serve different purposes: on one hand, artists create collections that exist independently of art-making practice or are considered personal, and on the other hand, collections that constitute the methodology or finished work of art. While an artist's personal collection might conform to the connoisseurship of 'serious' collectors,[9] an artistic collection, that is, one that constitutes the artwork in some aspect, differs in that it demonstrates a 'distinct character which links it to the creative process'.[10] Historically, the most prevalent form of artists' collections inhabited a space between personal enthusiasm and source material for artwork, primarily in the types of still life objects that decorated the background of portrait paintings. Most notable of this kind was American Charles Willson Peale, an artist and polymath who amassed an extensive natural and cultural history collection, which subsequently became the first American museum, memorialised in his painting *The Artist in His Museum (1822)* (Fig. 1). Such artists' collections at this time (the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries) provided the objects necessary to paint 'from life' in a manner that reflected the Romantic (and specifically Deist in Peale's case) concern with nature and sensory experience.[11] But the interest in collecting that provided source material for artists' works during this time also reflected a change

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[8] J Clifford, 'On collecting art and culture', in S During (ed.), *The cultural studies reader*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, UK, p. 62.
[9] The connoisseur represents a 'type A' collector who is a rational objective expert as opposed to the amateur 'type B' collector who is a passionate subjective consumer. Belk op. cit., p. 45.
[10] J Putnam, *Art and artifact: the museum as medium*, 2nd edn, Thames & Hudson, New York, 2009, p. 12. This assertion is also explored in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998.
[11] S Stewart, 'Death and life, in that order, in the works of Charles Willson Peale', in J Elsner & R Cardinal (eds), *The cultures of collecting,* Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1994, pp. 209.
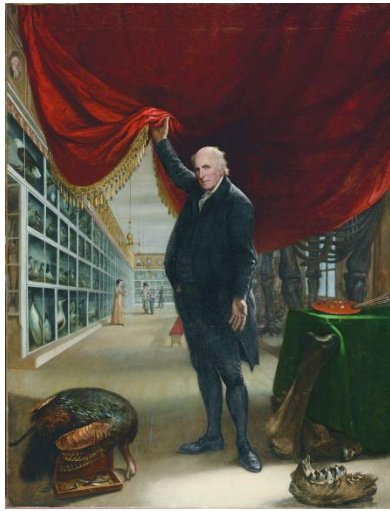
Fig. 1   Fig. 2   Fig. 3

in artists recognised their position as contributors to acculturation and theoretical discourses about personal and collective identities that was to inform the practices of Twentieth-Century artists.

In the early twentieth century, artists' collections were integral to shaping the visual style of Cubism and Surrealism, with Spanish artist Pablo Picasso and French poet André Breton collecting art, ethnographic artefacts and curiosities.[12] Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon (1907)* (Fig. 2), clearly depicts the African masks (Fig. 3) Picasso collected as inspiration for the multi-point perspective of Cubism. While Breton's collection *Mur de l'atelier d'André Breton (1922 – 1966)* (Fig. 4), a wall of which is displayed at the Centre Pompidou in Paris alongside Surrealist artworks, demonstrates parallels with his *Poème-Objet (1935)* (Fig. 5) by recognising the metonymic and associative relationships between objects within a collection. The use of the artist's collection as source material for representational artwork is still an

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[12] Furthermore, Peale's and Breton's personal collections both share similarities in the significance their collections had in providing evidentiary support for their respective social polemics. However, where Peale's upheld his Deist belief that reality was based upon scientific knowledge rather than mythological thought, Breton's exemplified the Surrealist belief in the unconscious.

Fig. 4
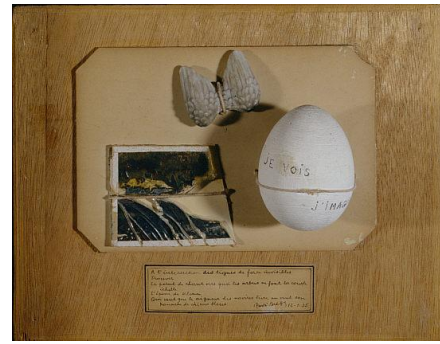
Fig. 5

important function of the collection, with Gerhard Richter's *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* providing source material for some of his paintings, such as *Atlas Sheet 13 (1964)* (Fig. 6) providing the imagery for *Woman Descending the Staircase (Frau, die Treppe herabgehend) (1965)* (Fig. 7). However, by the First World War (1914 – 1918) artists' collections began to engage with multiple concerns that were based upon the physical and cultural destruction of social orders, the loss of the auratic

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

object through new technologies of mechanical reproduction, the shift from optical (painting) to tactile (assemblage) modes of presentation, and the critique of structures of acculturation (class, history, economy, and institutions).

With the emergence of Duchamp's 'Readymades', such as *Fountain (1917)* (Fig. 8), mass-produced objects (i.e. everyday objects with a functional rather than an

aesthetic value) became positioned as art objects. This represented a shift in the type of artistic production artists engage with, from one of the creation of a work of art to one of selection of the art object. As such, this allowed the collection of any object based upon a myriad of concerns such as formal or aesthetic qualities, symbolic, metonymic or mnemonic function, and historical, cultural, political or economic value. American art theorist Benjamin Buchloh describes this as the 'artist-as-collector', crediting Duchamp as its instigator.[13] Using collecting as a methodology, artists in the twentieth century presented life as art (and conversely art as life), rather than as Peale and his contemporaries did by creating art (paintings, sculpture) from observing life. This shift in how art was constructed was instrumental to the emergence of artworks that challenged socio-cultural structures by utilising the material production that supported such structures. The artwork produced through this use of material production relied upon the subversion of objects, images, and texts to challenge socially prescribed ways of approaching the world.

Fig. 8   Fig. 9   Fig. 10

The Dadaists (1916 – 1923) utilised collecting in the construction of collages and assemblages as a way to disrupt social conventions through the juxtaposition of disparate elements. German artists Kurt Schwitters and Hannah Höch used ephemera and photographic images in their collages, such as Schwitters' *Mz 410 irgendsowas (Something or Other) (1922)* (Fig. 9) and Höch's *Bürgerliches Brautpaar (Streit)(Bourgeois Wedding Couple [Quarrel]) (1919)* (Fig. 10) and by doing so presented new ways of responding to their physical and social environment by using

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[13] B Buchloh, 'The museum fictions of Marcel Broodthaers', in A A Bronson & P Gale (eds), *Museums by artists*, Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada, 1983, pp. 48.

everyday materials rather than an illusionistic pictorial representation. The Surrealists (1924 – 1966) expanded upon the disruption that this type of collection created, using these same modes as well as new technologies, such as film, to express the unconscious through chance and association. To this end, *objets trouvés* (literally 'found objects') were instrumental in the development of the symbolic properties of objects, their associative use within the collection and their metonymic function of representing internal and psychological factors. The artworks produced by the Dadaists and Surrealists represented an engagement with a Duchampian model of the artist as selector (or collector) but they were still indebted to a history of the artist as creator.[14]

Within this interest of art embodying a social/cultural totality, artists of the 1960s, experimented with collections that were based on everyday practices of accumulation, commerce and waste associated with the growth of consumer goods and an expanding middle class. For example, the French movement Nouveau Réalisme (New Realism) (1960 – 1970) directly appropriated mass-produced objects for use in their collages, assemblages, installations, and happenings as a way to represent the urban reality of their time. Members of the Nouveau Réalisme, Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri constructed *tableaux-pièges* or snare pictures, such as *Repas hongrois, tableau-piège (1963)* (Fig. 11), a tabletop assemblage in which the remnants of a meal had been consumed and frozen in disorder, and Frenchman Arman used detritus in his *Poubelles* or dustbins, *Poubelle des Halles (1961)* (Fig. 12), in which accumulated waste was preserved in an acrylic vitrine as both a critique of consumerism and an aesthetic experience. By using mundane and mass produced objects, these types of artistic collections placed themselves in opposition to traditional collections that aimed to conserve the very best of culture by relying on the value of 'unique' objects. As a result, they positioned artistic collections as a critique of prevailing structures of value and processes of acculturation from economic to institutional models.

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[14] While this debate will not be argued for or against within the dissertation, the dichotomy these two artistic positions present is something that the seminal artists discussed within the last chapter engage with as a form of slippage between their personal position within their collecting methodologies and the material output of their practices.

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

During the 1960s artists adopted the mechanisms of cultural production, arbitration and consumption, staging their own interventions within this social/cultural system through installations and happenings that mirrored stores, restaurants, and museums. Notably, Swedish artist Claes Oldenburg explored the systems of value placed upon the art object in works such as *The Store (1961)* (Fig. 13), where Oldenburg offered his artworks, which replicated what he referred to as 'city nature' (popular objects that included items found on the street, toys bought in stores, residues of performances, souvenirs of travel, etc)[15], for sale at the price of the original object. Installations such as this referenced the commodification of artwork within the gallery system and helped to position the artist as more than a cultural producer but as a participant in the acculturation process, a shift that was instrumental in the proliferation of artists' museums and the subsequent institutional critique that developed in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Fig. 13

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[15] C van Bruggen, 'Claes Oldenburg', in K McShine (ed.), *The museum as muse: artists reflect*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999, p. 73.
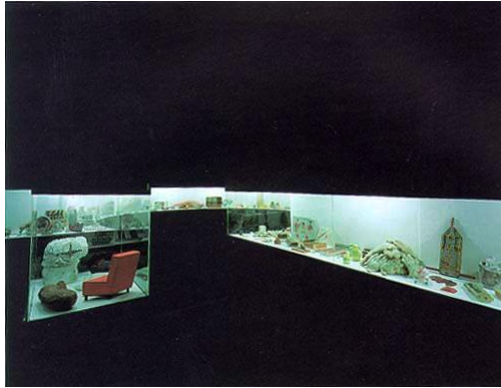
Fig. 14
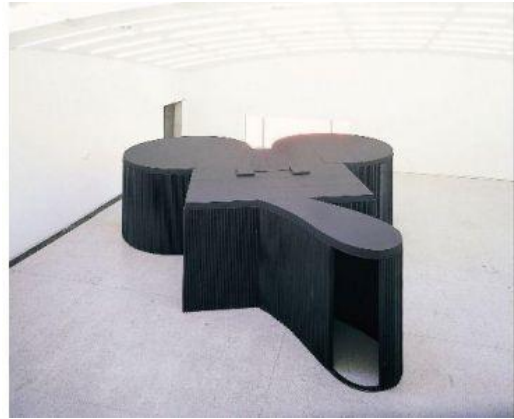
Fig. 15

The phenomenon of artists' museums is indicative of an engagement with the museological process, which entails collecting, selecting, sorting, conserving, storing, and presenting the object as an anthropological, ethnographic, archaeological, historical, and political tool. To this end, artistic collecting methodologies align themselves with several different but interrelated concerns: the artist's museum, the artist-as-curator, and institutional critique. Claes Oldenburg's *Mouse Museum (1965 – 77)* (Fig. 14 & Fig. 15), which consisted of studio-objects (small models and remnants of his works), altered objects and unaltered objects (found or bought) in a mouse-shaped building (referencing early film cameras and the cartoon Mickey Mouse), constitutes an early investigation into the collection as an artwork designed for public display as opposed to Breton's personal or Peale's educational collection. By placing objects of popular culture alongside personal artworks, Oldenburg challenged traditional hierarchies of high and low culture, but also made a statement that cultural significance ultimately rests with the common person and the spectacle of consumerism. This form of social critique is different to other forms of artist museums, such as Swiss artist Herbert Distel's *Das Schubladenmuseum (Museum of Drawers) (1970 – 77)* (Figs. 16 & 17), a miniature survey of the artwork of 500 artists practicing in the 1960s and 1970s (including members of the historical avant-garde such as Picasso and Duchamp, whose contribution served to contextualise the work of later artists). In the capacity of both artist and 'curator' Distel drove the historicising process of selection, collection, and preservation rather than an external institution as a way to record visually in one space the divergent concerns within art at the time.

Fig. 16   Fig. 17   Fig. 18

Flemish artist Marcel Broodthaers in his *Musee d'Art Moderne, Departement des Aigles (1968 – 72),* created a 'fictional' museum that was conceived as a 'political parody of artistic events and … an artistic parody of political events'.[16] To this end, Broodthaers took on the roles of director, curator, designer, and publicity agent and over a five year period exhibited various sections of the museum such as Seventeenth and Nineteenth-Century art as well as publicity and finance, appropriating not only methods of display but also the accompanying documentation in order to critique the mechanisms of acculturation. An example can be seen in *Musee d'Art Moderne, Departement des Aigles, Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis Heute) (Figures Section [The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present]) (1972)* (Fig. 18). While this work was constructed as a museum parody, the political impetus of Broodthaers' critique helped shape the concerns that underpinned the Institutional Critique movement of the latter twentieth century,[17] by disputing the traditional systems of classification, documentation, storage and exhibition of artworks and exposing the absurdity of the metanarrative of the museum.

The emergence of the artist-as-curator during the late 1960s and early 1970s was indicative of a change in the types of collecting practices artists were engaged with. Rather than constructing their own personal collections, artists were increasingly

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[16] M Broodthaers, 'Section des Figures', in *Der Adler vom Oligozän bis Heute*, vol. 1, Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, 1972, pp. 18 – 19, cited in K Erickson, 'Marcel Broodthaers', in K McShine (ed.), *The museum as muse: artists reflect*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999, p. 62.

[17] Pivotal figures within this movement such as Fred Wilson and Joseph Kosuth will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

working with the collections of public institutions, with museums such as the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, inviting Andy Warhol to curate the institution's collection in *Raid the Icebox I with Andy Warhol (1970)* (Fig. 19 & Fig. 20). Instead of only displaying artworks from the collection, Warhol chose to exhibit

Fig. 19   Fig. 20

more quotidian objects such as cabinets of shoes and the Windsor chairs used to repair more valuable furniture, often displaying the items as they were stored. To this end, Warhol challenged the status of high and low cultural artefacts and exposed the cultural censorship of art institutions in their selection of items to display.

This type of museum intervention paved the way for other forms of institutional critique to occur, such as that practiced by American artists Joseph Kosuth and Fred Wilson: Kosuth undertook an investigation into what makes an artwork acceptable publically and Wilson pursued the project of reinstating an African-American voice into historical collections. Kosuth's installation *The Brooklyn Museum Collection: The Play of the Unmentionable (1990)* (Fig. 21), addressed the institutional censorship of artworks from Ancient Egypt to contemporary art from the Brooklyn Museum's collection that had the potential to be deemed controversial due to religious, social, political, or art historical issues at the time of their making or due to changing social mores. Wilson's intervention at the Maryland Historical Society, *Mining the Museum (1992)*, including for example the vignette *Cabinet Making* (Fig. 22), used the museum's existing collection to question the assumed neutrality and inclusiveness of institutional portrayals of African-Americans within American history. By repositioning cultural artefacts and subverting exhibition strategies, Wilson depicted the racial dynamics of the time, exposing the historical amnesia enforced by cultural institutions. In this way, artist's collections become about

positioning themselves (as an artist or as a minority for example) within a greater cultural history and challenging the assumptions of that history through the apparatus of the museum.

Fig. 21

Fig. 22

However, within the twenty-first century there is a range of collecting methodologies that artists engage with, most of which deal with historical concerns in some form or another, such as the use of collected objects in formal/aesthetic compositions. An example of this approach is found in Swedish artist Michael Johansson's *Green Piece (2009)* (Fig. 23), whose assemblages are reminiscent of American artist Donald Judd's 'Specific Objects', such as *Untitled (1971)* (Fig. 24). In this way Johansson's assemblage speaks to a Minimalist aesthetic. Yet in Judd's work the object is designed so that the central notions of concept, construction and finish create a cohesion within the final work, while Johansson's work relies upon ordering disparate objects until they fit together to create a cohesive whole.

Fig. 23
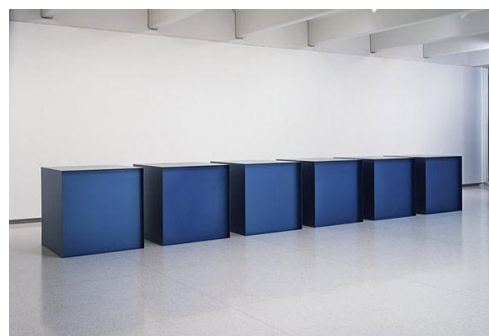
Fig. 24

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There are other ways in which artists engage with history in the twenty-first century. Importantly for this dissertation, contemporary artists also engage with the structural condition of the collection as a site that generates meaning, from personal and collective histories to other forms of narratives. Artists do this in several ways, one by presenting collections as complete artworks where the objects/images/texts act as signifiers that work together to create relationships. Whether two dimensional or three dimensional, logically or randomly organised, the commonality between these works is the representation of familiar social, cultural, and natural phenomena that in turn have symbolic, metonymic, and mnemonic function. Contemporary artists may also appropriate archival structures such as modes of documentation, inventories, and forms of storage and display which recontextualise objects/images/texts into a system of knowledge, preservation, and acculturation. Artworks that utilise these structures are able to challenge and subvert conventional and traditional representations and functions of historic meaning making and the dialectic of memory and amnesia that this entails. A third way in which recent artistic practice has engaged with the structural condition of the collection is by appropriating a collecting methodology that is based upon the collection of data and physical 'evidence', which like Institutional Critique uses the language and methodology of the sciences and humanities to construct the work. English theorist Marquard Smith positions this type of collecting practice as the artist as researcher.[18] While the artistic outcomes of this type of methodology do not necessarily visually represent traditional collections, the process and construction of the work is aligned with empirical investigation.

Within these approaches are key artists whose practices conceptually explore paradoxes within the structures of collections, the motivations for collecting and the

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[18] M Smith, 'Introduction', in M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008, p. xvi. . While in the later half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century there has been an emphasis on institutional critique and rational ways of approaching artistic practice (for example the use of uneasy hybrids such as science-art, or specifically the artist-as-collector, the artist-as-curator or the artist-as-researcher as if these activities were somehow different from artistic activity). Regardless of the approaches to how art is discussed, what these debates demonstrate is the task of identifying exactly what it is that artists do and how they do it in a way that does not undermine the integrity of their work, denigrate their cultural contribution, or segregate artistic practice from other forms of exchange and production as either an evolved or devolved activity.

meaning that is created by collections. To this end, two models of collecting, the *Wunderkammer* and the systematic collection, are important in unpacking the methodological practices of artists because they represent alternative models of 'making sense' and thus through their different strategies provide ways for the artist to discover new ways of interacting with and representing the world. This focus will be developed within the chapters that follow, however, before this is outlined, an understanding of the surrounding discourses on collecting within artistic practice will be discussed in order to identify any gaps in knowledge in the field.

Literature review and scope of project

In order to examine how artists use collecting as a methodology in their practices it is important to understand historical and contemporary ideas about what it means to collect. The majority of texts regarding collection fall within interdisciplinary discourses that incorporate: psychoanalysis, which describes collections and objects within terms of desire, drive and possession, and subject/object relationships; semiotics, which investigates signs and symbols as a form of cultural communication; structuralism and post-structuralism, which define and investigate collecting as a complex system of inter-related parts through narrative aspects of their use; anthropology, which establishes cultural, societal and historical values; and cultural theories such as Marxism, which views the object in terms of cultural production, commodity fetishism, and economic value.

Within the discourses surrounding objects and collecting, there are seminal documents that provide the basis of knowledge within the field of museological theory. Susan Pearce is regarded as an authority within this field, specialising in the significance and role of the collection within the museum and by developing terms with which to discuss these topics.[19] In, *Museums, objects and collections* (1992), Pearce offers an important insight into the psychological and social reasons why people collect that has informed current discourses about collecting, specifically drawing on psychoanalysis, material culture, anthropology, structuralism, and

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[19] Her seminal texts include, S Pearce, *Museums, objects, and collections*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C., 1992; S Pearce (ed) *Museum studies in material culture*, Leister University Press, Leister, 1989; S Pearce (ed), *Objects of Knowledge*, Vol. 1, New Research in Museum Studies, Althone Press, London, 1990; and S Pearce, *Art in Museums*, The Athlone Press, London, 1995.

semiotics to define the subject – object relationships (specifically the British branch of objects relations theory) that guide what Pearce sees as an essentially innate desire to collect. Pearce proposes the following motivations of why people collect: leisure and play, aesthetics, competition, chance and risk, fantasy, a sense of community (belonging), prestige (status), domination, sensual gratification, sexual foreplay, desire to reframe objects, the pleasing rhythm of sameness and difference, ambition to achieve perfection, extending the self, reaffirming the body, producing gender-identity, and achieving immortality.[20] Yet Dutch theorist Mieke Bal, in 'Telling objects: A narrative perspective on collecting' (1994), suggests that underlying the majority of the motivations in this list is the concept of 'fetishism'.[21] Bal's approach to collecting thus appears to share similarities with Pearce's definition of the 'fetish' collection, by examining a psychoanalytical and a Marxist-political understanding of the fetish, but avoids Pearce's anthropological meaning.[22] Moreover, Pearce's list neglects motivations such as economic investment (identified by Belk), preservation/conservation (identified by both Belk and Pearce), and education (identified by Pearce herself in the same work from which this list is taken).[23]

Pearce also identifies three modes of collecting to offer an interesting, if incomplete, perspective to the interpretation of artists' collections. First is the 'souvenir' collection, where each object is a mnemonic device that transmits the past into the present.[24] This type of collecting represents a personalised and individual engagement with history. Susan Stewart elaborates upon Pearce's definition by examining the souvenir's metaphoric role as a temporal and spatial mediator of the narrative of remarkable experience. However, a souvenir is always an incomplete object, through its inability to ever recoup the authentic experience and by its

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[20] See Chapter 3, 'Collecting: Body and Soul', in S Pearce, *Museums, objects, and collections*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C., 1992, pp. 36 – 67.

[21] M Bal, 'Telling objects: a narrative perspective on collecting', in R Cardinal & J Elsner (eds), *The cultures of collecting*, Reaktion Books Ltd., London, UK, 1994, p. 104.

[22] In Pearce's anthropological context a fetish is defined as an object that is imbued with spirit in a religious sense, such as Christian relics or Pagan charms. Pearce, op. cit., p. 82.

[23] For investment, see, Belk, op. cit., p. 56; for preservation/conservation, see Belk, op. cit., p. 82 & Pearce, op. cit., p. 2; for education, see Pearce, op. cit., p. 3. While at first it seems that these three additional motivations could be encapsulated within Pearce's list, such as preservation being placed within 'achieving immortality', these motivations each have a different impetus. For example, 'achieving immortality' as defined by Pearce entails a personal posthumous legacy, where the collection acts as tangible historical evidence of the *collector's* significance, where as preservation entails saving *objects* that are deemed significant with the collector acting as custodian rather than owner.

[24] Pearce, op. cit., p. 69 – 73.

requirement of an accompanying narrative, which serves to complete it. Stewart uses language and literature as the basis for her investigation, what this dissertation does is to position the ideas of narrative and its objects (the collection and the souvenir) within the sphere of visual language and 'visual culture'[25] as a way to discuss the role that collecting has within contemporary artistic practice as a site of narrative and experience. Stewart's text is seminal to this dissertation (and significant in the field) in both its interdisciplinary approach that incorporates semiotics, psychoanalytic, feminist, and Marxist theory, but more importantly due to its examination of how objects (Stewart would suggest that these are everyday objects) are used to 'narrate' a specific and personal vision of the world. This narrative and mnemonic function of the object is integral to the practices of artists such as French artist Christian Boltanski, as will be demonstrated.

Bal also positions the collection as a narrative, yet her reading is more aligned with Pearce's definition of the second mode of collecting, the 'fetish' collection. This is a personal form of collecting where an object is removed from its historical and cultural context and becomes redefined by the collector.[26] While Bal's reading of the collection focuses on how it functions as a story *in media res*[27], rather than how narratives are applied within the framework of a collection, she acknowledges that the visual nature of objects allows them to hold meaning, thus they can be read semiotically. While a souvenir is mnemonic, a fetish is metonymic and symbolic, so the collection becomes a semiotic system 'in which a subjectively focalised sequence of events is presented and communicated'.[28] For an object to participate in this narrative, its original function and value must be removed to transform it from an object into a sign.[29] Within this dissertation, Bal's correlation between narrative and collection is essential to understanding why artistic archives can be subverted and used as narrative tools, even if this dissertation does not seek to position the polemic within a psychoanalytic context.

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[25] Hal Foster uses this term specifically to describe an art historical understanding of the visual. Foster, H, 'The archive without museums', *October*, vol. 77, Summer 1996, pp. 97 – 119.

[26] Pearce, op. cit., pp. 73 – 84.

[27] This is a narrative where the chronology of the 'story' swaps the middle and the beginning.

[28] Bal, op. cit., p. 100.

[29] Bal uses the words 'abducted' and 'denuded' to suggest a gendered reading of the violence done to the object by this act.

A theoretical understanding of the object and the collection central to Pearce's, Bal's, and Stewart's texts is provided by French theorist Jean Baudrillard's *A System of Objects* (2005), which critically investigates the collection as a ramified capitalist system of values and symbols.[30] Where Belk's argument focuses on material culture and collecting as the creation of a consumer society, Baudrillard positions the function of objects within a system of collecting from a psychoanalytic perspective. As the basis of his argument, Baudrillard defines the object within a collection as 'loved'[31], where the original function of the object becomes abstracted through physical possession and mental passion, creating an object that is defined by, but also ultimately defines, the subject.

There are three important aspects of Baudrillard's argument which have formed the basis of Pearce's, Bal's, and Stewart's polemics on collecting: collecting objects is an act that is actually about collecting aspects of the subject; while an ideal collection strives towards completion, the idea of perfection also spells the metaphorical death of the subject, therefore collections are never truly undertaken to reach completion, and indeed the collection provides the collector with a Freudian game of *fort / da*, in which the reality of the death of the collector is suspended by the 'infinite cycle of disappearance and reappearance of the object';[32] and objects placed within the serial play of the collection exist outside of time, through their recontextualisation that replaces a linear temporality with a systematic dimension displacing real time by providing a space where time's continuity is cut up into patterns that are perpetually replayed. An underlying aspect of Baudrillard's argument that is problematic to the field, and which Pearce, Bal, and Stewart reinforce, is his psychoanalytic assumption that the act of collecting is a masculine one about possession, a lack of sexual desire (such as prepubescent children and old men), and mastery of the subject's world (as a form of regression). This dissertation does not deny that these are at times functions of the collection, and specifically that

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[30] Clifford, op. cit., p. 62. The term 'ramified' here connotes the Postmodern trope of the 'rhizome' developed by French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the principle of which reflects connection and heterogeneity (as opposed to the tree metaphor described below in the systematic collection). See G Deleuze & F Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1987, p. 7.
[31] J Baudrillard, *The system of objects*, trans. J Benedict, 2nd edn, Verso, London, 2005, p. 91. Belk analyses this phenomenon.
[32] ibid., p. 104.

'mastery of a subject's world' is a primary concern. The desire to organise and make patterns is typical of the collector; Baudrillard positions this as a form of anal regression whereas Clifford positions it as a way to channel obsession.[33] Other ways of viewing this statement are to approach it either from Pearce's reading of 'constructing a relationship with the world'[34], or from Winzen's position of 'the imaginative process of association made material'[35], rather than only as mastery or domination. Winzen's and Pearce's statements are more beneficial in understanding the examples of artists' collections discussed within the dissertation, rather than Baudrillard's position of mastery, due to the intuitive and historical models of collecting used.

Both the souvenir and the fetish collection are indicative of a private and individual pursuit, but the last mode of collecting identified by Pearce, the 'systematic' collection, is created by a representational cultural body, such as museums, for the benefit of the public. This mode of collection represents the taxonomic and didactic display of an ideology, where specimens are organised according to patterns, such as family trees of species, the development of humankind, or periods/schools in art history. Where the souvenir and fetish collection represent 'feeling', the systematic collection demonstrates 'understanding', through classifying and mapping out the world.[36] However, both Stewart and Clifford recognise that this creates an 'illusion of adequate representation of a world by first cutting objects out of specific contexts … and making them 'stand for' abstract wholes'.[37] It is this 'illusion' that is important to Crimp's position that the museum is a 'fiction', based upon French theorist Michael Foucault's assertion that history is a fabricated narrative.[38] Central to Clifford's anthropological approach to collecting is the ethics of museum collections and the importance of representing the historical and temporal position of

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[33] Clifford, op. cit., p. 60.
[34] Pearce, op. cit. p. 68. This is a statement that Pearce later contradicts in her referral to the systematic collection by reverting to the idea of the collection as a form of control over the world.
[35] Winzen, loc. cit.
[36] Pearce, op. cit., p. 84.
[37] Clifford, op. cit, p. 61. See also, Stewart, op. cit., p. 162.
[38] Crimp, op. cit., p. 200; M Foucault, *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972 – 1977*, C Gordon (ed.), Pantheon Books, New York, 1980, p. 193

the collector.[39] The idea that the museum creates a fiction calls into question the objective hierarchy that constitutes its status as a 'historical-cultural theatre of memory'.[40] Clifford states that where Culture (as in the universal phenomenon that underlies different cultures) is enduring, traditional and structural, history is contingent, fragmented and syncretic.[41] For artists, the systematic collection, especially through the use of archival structures, becomes a site of subversion where this dichotomy can be challenged.

This 'systematic' mode is important to understanding artistic practices that engage with institutional and historical critiques through the archive, due to the very specific and rational way in which this mode operates, providing a visual language of comparison and contrasts. Pearce's argument here is problematic, as she sees this form of collecting having a two-way relationship with the audience, where the collection has something to say and the viewer has something to learn (or disagree with).[42] This essentially creates a one-way conversation or didactic experience for the viewer. Furthermore, Pearce's position is underlined by designating collections as 'closed' systems. What is meant by this is that each has boundaries that define how the collection is to be approached, reflecting the psychological, ideological, cultural, societal, economic, and political position of the collector. Yet this analysis fails to see a collection as a discursive or 'open' system[43], through the significance of an interpretive rather than didactic experience, a position that artists such as Mark Dion and Susan Hiller express within their writings.[44] This is where the value of art historical, art theoretical, and artists' texts about collecting are integral to refining this interdisciplinary debate.

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[39] While Clifford's focus of study is primarily the integration of non-Western cultures into Western systems of collecting, Clifford does acknowledge art as complexly bound to culture and discusses the importance of collecting to Surrealist artists.

[40] Clifford, op. cit., p. 75.

[41] Clifford, op. cit., p. 69.

[42] Pearce, op. cit., p. 87.

[43] Winzen states that, 'while a conventional collection unfolds, adds to, and completes the subject of a given collection (butterflies, books, documents), artistic collecting is relatively open-ended, less goal-oriented'. Winzen, loc. cit.

[44] M Kwon, 'Interview: Miwon Kwon in conversation with Mark Dion', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & M Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, UK, 1997, pp. 17 – 18.; S Hiller, 'Working through objects', in C Merewether (ed.), *The archive*, Whitechapel, London, UK & The MIT Press, Massachusetts, MA, 2006, p. 42.

While acknowledging the interdisciplinary discourses mentioned above, within the visual arts, collecting is also further categorised under art historical movements (e.g. Dada, Surrealism, and Institutional Critique) and theoretical labels (e.g. '*Wunderkammer* principle'[45], and the Archive). What this indicates is that collecting is a methodology that spans diverse artistic concerns. While there have been many books on collecting, each concerning itself with a specific artistic concern, however, they also tend to situate artistic collecting within the discourse of museology. Seminal examples of this include: *Museums by Artists* (1983) edited by AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (1999) edited by Kynaston McShine, and *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (2009) by James Putnam. Two texts in particular have been instrumental to the position of this dissertation. German art historian Walter Grasskamp's contribution to *Museums by Artists*, 'Artists and Other Collectors' (1982), traces a unique history of artists' collections, from Renaissance studio collections and collection pictures to collages, assemblages and serial photography, culminating in the proliferation of collecting methodologies in artistic practices of the 1960s to 1970s.[46] Grasskamp discusses the evolving concerns artists during these decades were addressing with their collections, from presenting estates to subverting museum practices and ultimately to destabilising the autonomy of works of art by artists appropriating the types of idiosyncratic private collections of individuals as well as institutions. Putnam's *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (2009) also provides a detailed history of artists' collections positioned in order to demonstrate an ongoing artistic engagement with the systematic collections of the museum. Furthermore it discusses two models of collecting important to this dissertation, the *Wunderkammer* and the institutional or systematic collection.

This engagement with the museum is not the only type of collecting artists construct. In 'Deep Storage' (1998), American curator Ingrid Schaffner positions the multiple manifestations of collecting in artistic practice under the banner of 'deep storage', which refers to the large storage vaults of museums that only display a minute

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[45] The '*Wunderkammer* principle' was coined by Putnam to describe an artistic engagement with the miraculous through the juxtaposition of the collection and by exploring the imaginative and transformative parameters between the natural and artificial. See, Putnam, op. cit., pp. 8 – 10.
[46] W Grasskamp, 'Artists and other collectors', in AA Bronson & P Gale (eds), *Museums by Artists*, trans. P Marsden, Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada, 1983, pp. 129 – 148.

fraction of their collection.[47] Rather than serving as an inaccessible cultural and natural mausoleum, Schaffner states that, for the artist, the collection as a site of storage or containment is an energy reserve, providing the potential for new works. This recognition of the dynamic condition of the artist's collection is integral to how narratives of discovery are discussed within this dissertation. Furthermore, Schaffner is instrumental in determining the difference between a collection and an archive, which will be discussed in the next section.

Winzen refines Schaffner's position further by developing how artists' collections differ from other types of collecting. To do this, Winzen proposes three paradoxes to which all collections adhere:[48] 'Available Material, Unavailable Future', in which the collection guards against the passage of time (and ultimately the death of the collector which recalls Baudrillard's position), the uncertainty of the future and the fear of loss through material accumulation as a form of exchange or barter; 'Similar Dissimilarity', in which the unique singular object placed within a continuum of other equally unique objects is expected to retain its singularity, yet serve to enforce the overall cohesion of the collection; and 'Protective Destruction', in which the specimen preserved within the collection is also simultaneously destroyed in some aspect by removing it from its original context and placing it in a new discursive system.[49] Winzen argues that artist's collections are by their very nature paradoxical to other forms of collecting. So collecting for artists becomes a way of looking towards the future rather than just lamenting the unavailability of the future through the recognition of available material,[50] a way of exploring the relationships between the trivial and the exceptional rather than only using the structure of collecting to determine dissimilarity through similarity and by collecting without destroying, in other words renegotiating the object as something immaterial or simulated and by

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[47] I Schaffner, 'Deep Storage' in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 11. *Deep storage* is a both a book and a catalogue for an exhibition of the same name held at the Haus Der Kunst, Munich, Germany and P.S. 1, New York in 1998, which was originally conceived in Schaffner's essay as 'Deep storage: on the art of archiving' in *Frieze Magazine* Issue 23 June August 1995, a precursor to this essay.
[48] See Winzen, op. cit., pp. 22 – 24.
[49] Susan Pearce would view this as fetishistic in which the object is now defined by the collector, and both Walter Benjamin and Jean Baudrillard would consider this as a removal from use value or functionality to one defined by the collection itself (which in Baudrillard's case is always a reflection of the collector and thus also fetishistic).
[50] This recalls Clifford's argument of present-becoming-future, rather than the collection preserving the past, that some cultures and sub-cultures ascribe to, specifically for this dissertation, such as the collectors of *Wunderkammer* and the Surrealists.

doing so questioning the tension inherent in the simultaneous protective and destructive nature of collecting.

The dichotomy of the protective versus the destructive nature of collecting is seen in how the collection functions as a site of memory. American theorist Benjamin Buchloh investigates the mnemonic function of Richter's archival project, *Atlas* (1962 – present). Rather than being an archive of memory, *Atlas* is instead an archive of amnesia, repression, and anomie in which the collective banality of the found images, through selection by Richter, become a subconscious documentation of his personal response to collective events (specifically the events such as the Holocaust and the formation of East and West Berlin) mediated by images. What is important about Buchloh's reading of *Atlas* is that it links the artist's selection of the found item with the artist's environment and exposes the crisis of memory that occurs within the archive, which in turn allows for the metaphorical and symbolic reading of the collection that this dissertation takes to enter into its discourse. In 'An archival Impulse' (2004), American theorist Hal Foster agrees with Buchloh's belief that the archive represents a failure in collective memory, or 'memory-crisis'[51] yet Foster argues that, rather than only representing anomie, contemporary artists' collections are also allegorical and specifically provide 'alternative knowledge' and 'counter-memory' through vernacular 'exchanges', narrative 'asides', and entropic 'gaps'.

It is through the non-hierarchical structure of the installation that Foster elaborates upon the concepts of 'alternative knowledge' and 'counter-memory' by examining the practices of Tacita Dean, Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn, and American artist Sam Durant, whose works all reference and produce informal archives and do so by illuminating the 'nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private'.[52] The aim of the archive in contemporary art is to transform its traditional historical didacticism and ideological structure to expose the fragmentary nature of any form of meaning making through the presentation of

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[51] Foster uses this term to define the mnemonic loss that occurs within the archive based upon the trope Richard Terdiman uses in R Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the memory crisis,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1993, and Daniel Heller-Roazen's understanding that this memory crisis is natural to the function of the archive in D Heller-Roazen, 'Tradition's Destruction: on the Library of Alexandria', *October,* vol. 100, Spring 2002, cited in H Foster, 'Archives of modern art', *October*, vol. 99, Winter 2002, p. 86.

[52] H Foster, 'An archival impulse', *October*, vol. 110, Autumn 2004, p. 5.

material fragments. This, in turn, fractures the archive's hegemony, which opens up alternate dialogues and incorporates subjective and fictive positions into the archive's structure. Foster demonstrates that the archive has moved beyond an archaeological or excavation site, in which the past conforms to an idea of the present's foundation, to a construction site, where available material, to borrow Winzen's term, no longer guards against future uncertainty but creates its own 'future' through its recontextualisation. Foster believes that this signals a contemporary desire to move away from the melancholic and traumatic archive of history by the re-introduction of a utopian no-place, which mirrors the no-place of the archive.[53] Rather than reflecting an ideal system, this utopian no-place is specifically partial, open-ended and multi-faceted (heterotopian instead of dystopian).[54] Indeed, Foster demonstrates that instead of mourning the loss and displacement of history, artists embrace it, using it to create a discursive platform in which counter-memory enters the archive attempting to remedy an amnesiac culture by transforming them from 'distracted viewers onto engaged discussants'.[55]

Terms specific to the argument

Given the diverse literature on artists who collect and their collecting methodologies, it is important to define specific terms that contextualise these arguments in terms of how they are situated within this dissertation. This dissertation often refers to what is collected as an 'object.' While many critics use this term in a psychoanalytic sense, and with that a specifically British branch of object/subject relationships, within the context of this argument the object refers to the 'found' object or *objet trouvés*. The emphasis here is on the found nature of the item and the intrinsic link it has with

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[53] The correlation between utopian and archival no-place can be discussed in terms of Michael Foucault's non-place of language (and ultimately the archival structure to which language adheres) which allows for the juxtaposition of unrelated things to be presented together, for example the categories of animals in 'a certain Chinese encyclopaedia' described by Borges which are organised into:

> (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camel hair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.

See, M Foucault, *The order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences*, Vintage Books, New York, 1970, pp. xv – xvi.
[54] Here this polemic calls Foster's partial utopia 'heterotopian', to use Foucault's term, as a way of acknowledging the disruption of discourses and continuity that the archives of Hirschhorn, Dean, and Durant imply.
[55] ibid., p.6

artistic collecting methodologies, which will be developed in subsequent chapters. The things artists collect fall into three distinct registers: the physical object (natural and man-made, from rare artefacts to refuse), image (ephemera, photographs – both tangible and digitally archived – film, artworks), and text (includes both physically and electronically stored data, textual references, lists, tables) – in other words, physical things, pictorial reproductions and information. Each one of these categories in turn dictates the way in which they are used, classified and stored and ultimately reflect the appropriate visual manifestation of an artist's conceptual concerns.

This leads to the next term that needs to be defined. How is an artist who uses a collecting methodology classified? Is there a special word for such a practitioner? With the proliferation of artists in the twentieth century using collecting within their practices, the terms used to describe such artists are varied. Benjamin Buchloh refers to artists who work in this way as 'collectors', based upon Marcel Duchamp's selection and repositioning of existing objects as works of art and the his 'original definition of the artist as a *flâneur*'.[56] For Buchloh this term is historical as it is based upon Walter Benjamin's belief in the intricate connection between the late Nineteenth-Century *flâneur* and collector and how they influenced the artists of the first two decades of the twentieth century.[57] Walter Grasskamp is more general in his approach to the term, calling artists who use a collecting methodology within their work as 'collecting artists'[58] (in the same way that artists who paint are referred to as painters), a term that this dissertation sees as problematic due to its over-generalised nature as it attempts to classify artists based upon their chosen 'medium'. Yet it is understood that artists now work across disciplines in hybrid practices, which as American art theorist Rosalind Krauss has argued is a post-medium condition, which rather than being a simple antidote to medium specificity, acknowledges the increasingly conceptually driven practices of contemporary artists.[59]

Grasskamp does define a more specific term for artists who collect: *Spurensicherer* (literally those who discover and record the traces), who appropriate scientific or

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[56] Buchloh, 'The museum fictions of Marcel Broodthaers', loc. cit.
[57] ibid.
[58] Grasskamp, op. cit., p. 135
[59] See, R Krauss, *A voyage on the North Sea: art in the age of the post-medium condition*, Thames & Hudson, New York, 1999. Interestingly, Krauss used Marcel Broodthaers' practice (who was recognised by Grasskamp as a 'collecting artist') to demonstrate her argument.

scholarly patterns of organisation in order to critique the museum as an objective and authoritative entity.[60] This reflects the current area of focus by theorists on artists who use a collecting methodology in their work as the majority of terms for these artists centre on the museum and institutional activities. English curator and writer James Putnam refers to the 'artist-curator', to describe someone who employs artistic interventions with institutional collections as an extension of their practice.[61] This represents an engagement with historical material (primarily objects) through installations that mirror museum displays in a way that provides a personalised, idiosyncratic voice in the objective system of the museum. Like artist-curators, who reposition existing objects within the frame of the museum, are what English cultural and art theorist Maquard Smith describes as artists whose work is '*embodied* and *evidenced* as research'.[62] These artists also work with collecting but, rather than utilising the collections of others, they investigate the world in a discursive and self-reflexive way by appropriating the ways in which researchers engage with found material. While Smith positions this type of artistic production within the debate surrounding practice-led-research, it displays a critique of the institutionalisation of knowledge through the subversion of its practices. Central to artists who work with institutional forms of collecting is the appropriation of 'systematic' tools, from methods of display to the methodology of investigation and selection of objects as a type of 'scientific' inquiry.[63] Due to the different motivations of artists who collect and the diverse, interdisciplinary outcomes of their work, this dissertation will not use terms such as 'collection-artists', or 'collection-art'[64] in order to classify artists whose practices exhibit a collecting methodology, nor will it use these other terms unless describing a historical or theoretical position.

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[60] Grasskamp, op. cit., p. 133.
[61] Putnam, op. cit., p. 132
[62] Smith, 'Introduction', p. xvi.
[63] The use of the term scientific here refers to the rational, rigorous and logical methodology that the sciences use when conducting and presenting research.
[64] Jessica Berry defines 'collection-art' (based upon Grasskamp's term 'collection-artist') as artists who use collecting as their artistic practice in her Doctor of Visual Art dissertation from the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, *Re:collections – collection motivations and methodologies as image, metaphor and process in contemporary art* (2005). As will become apparent, the position of this dissertation differs from that presented by Berry, whose study positions the modes of collecting defined by Pearce (souvenir, fetishistic, and systematic), as artistic motivations that through the appropriation of museological collecting methodologies present everyday objects as metaphor, process and imagery within contemporary art that engages with the collection.

In order to further refine the field of the types of collections artists create, a distinction must be made between two terms that are used interchangeably within texts that discuss collecting practices, that of the archive and the collection.[65] While an extensive analysis investigating the differences between the two terms is warranted, for the purpose of this study the following brief distinctions will help to contextualise how these terms are utilised within the research. *Collection* is primarily the act of accumulating objects and images but also information in a systemised manner. Some collections are open sets (e.g. the *Wunderkammer*) while others are finite sets (however difficult they are to complete), such as pre-decimal Australian coins. Whereas *archive* refers to a storage site (such as filing cabinets, index cards and databases) of the endless endeavour to record contingent time and art historically, collection manifests as a historical engagement with documents (such as photographs, accounts, inventories and records) and the taxonomic but also rhizomatic organisation that is involved in the formation of the collection.[66] The use of the word 'archive' is also understood in relation to its psychological and material condition as both a creative and destructive drive, as described by Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever* (1996) and its condition as a positivist system that governs language in Michael Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). The artwork and practices of the artists discussed within this dissertation are not easily defined by either term. Instead these works combine both aspects to conceptually interrogate archival and collecting practices.

Statement of the argument

Relics of All Things Precious investigates the role of collecting in contemporary art as a way to discover lost knowledge through found objects, present gaps, asides and fictions in historical and personal narratives, and the expression of intangible experiences and events. Central to this research project is an investigation of the strategies used by artists to break away from traditional archival/museological systems of power, classification, and validation to create an alternative collecting

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[65] See, for example, I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998; and M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008.

[66] S Spieker, *The big archive: art from bureaucracy*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA & London, UK, 2008, pp. 5 – 7.

experience for themselves and others. The overall aim of the dissertation is to demonstrate that there are specific artists whose practices utilise collecting as a tool of discovery in order to investigate the curious condition of humanity's relationship with the natural and constructed world through subjective, marginal, and open-ended narratives that sit at the nexus between memory and amnesia, fact and fiction, and the corporeal and psychological. Furthermore, this group of artists, while seeming to fit into a museum/ archive system, actually sit parallel to this system and by the strategies that they employ, navigate the physical and psychic world, creating new directions in collecting that surpass historical models, adding criticality, poetry, and novelty to both a personal and collective relationship with the world. This dissertation argues that such artists employ two opposite models of logic in the construction and presentation of their work: the model of the *Wunderkammer* (which relies upon intuition and aesthetics); and the model of the systematic collection (which relies upon rationality and structure).[67] Both models provide a narrative structure in which collected objects have a physical and symbolic presence that through the artist's translation and viewer's interpretation constructs both personal and historical engagement with history.

The evolving issues developed in the dissertation include investigating the difference between systematic collections and the *Wunderkammer*, defining both an understanding of the narrative structure the collection creates and the ways in which this structure manifests in artworks, determining how the collected object functions as a relic that heightens the dialectic between memory and amnesia, and analysing the role of curiosity, chance, wandering (physical and mental meanderings), and discovery in the expression of the open-ended narratives created by artists' collections. *Relics of All Things Precious* presents this research within four chapters that expand the field by critically appraising the model of the *Wunderkammer*, determining key historical characteristics that reflect this approach and then charting the evolution of these characteristics within the practices of key contemporary artists,

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[67] While much has been written about artists' collections that engage with the systematic collection, the socio/cultural outcomes it produces and the structural logic it implies, from institutional critique to the archive, these discourses have centred on the political and historical readings of such work. While, the majority of texts cite the Wunderkammer as a romantic and archaic model of collecting, there has been relatively little critical investigation as to why this model still engages contemporary artists and curators.

and comparing these same concerns with the extensive literature surrounding artistic engagement with systematic (institutional and scientific) forms of collecting.

<u>Structure and methodology</u>

Chapter One, *Curious Spaces: Travel, discovery, and collections*, provides a historical context in which to discuss contemporary collecting methodologies by examining the unique conditions of the Early Modern period (the three centuries spanning the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries) on European identity and the discovery and settlement of the 'New World'. This chapter will define the model of the *Wunderkammer*, based upon the Early Modern cabinet of curiosities and its relationship to the travel writing of the time, as a system of collection that is defined by idiosyncrasy, heterogeneity, juxtaposition, curiosity, travel, and narrative. Furthermore, this chapter compares the historical differences between the *Wunderkammer* and the types of specialised museum collections that emerged during the Enlightenment to contextualise the inherent differences between both models of collecting and meaning making.

This chapter will also trace how the model of the *Wunderkammer* survived as an artistic strategy, discussing the connections between curiosity, travel and collecting, and the creation of souvenirs of the 'vanishing' American frontier during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the practice of English-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge. The concerns in Muybridge's practice are compared to French photographer Eugene Atget's archival project of documenting Paris in transition during the industrial revolution and the influence of Benjamin's Nineteenth-Century figure of the collector and *flâneur* upon the practices of the early Twentieth-Century avant-garde.

Descriptions will follow on how strategies of collection, chance, and wandering defined subsequent artistic movements of the Dadaists, Surrealists, and Situationist International. The dissertation will explore the emergence of the Dadaist collage and assemblage as artists' collections that created shock and rupture through juxtaposition. Consideration is given to the use of collage as a Surrealist strategy of discovering the unconscious through chance and wandering, as well as to the

Situationist International strategy of *dérive* in terms of wandering, chance and *psychogeography,* the relationship between the physical and psychic aspects of the landscape. The chapter will finally compare these Twentieth-Century artistic concerns with the model of the *Wunderkammer* in order to determine how these concerns have evolved.

Chapter Two surveys traditional and alternative sites of artistic collections in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the types of artworks these collections create through different forms of presentation, and how the structure of these sites contribute to the construction of meaning inherent in the artwork. This chapter posits that these sites correspond to spaces in which a collection is housed. It examines the sites of collecting presented by literature within the field and redefines these sites based upon the formal structure of artists' collections (for example, installations, assemblages, collages, and books) to create three categories: the box, the tableau, and the archive. The box is a three-dimensional space in which a collection is presented, including the museum (and its storeroom), the studio, and the cabinet or display case. The tableau exists as a flat plane, in which the presentation (or representation) of the collection is contained within a 'frame', such as paintings. The archive has a temporal dimension. It is a storage space in which information, images, and objects are endlessly accumulated and preserved, such as a filing cabinet. Furthermore, the archive represents a flexible approach to display while reflecting a systematic approach to classification.

Within these sites, this chapter also identifies two visual structures that correspond to the two models of the *Wunderkammer* and the systematic collection: the flatbed (which represents spatial heterogeneity), and the grid (which represent visual order). These sites have had a significant impact on the development of art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, yet there are alternate sites that have influenced not only where a collection is held, but also what is collected and how to interact with it. Strategies employed to critique and expand these traditional sites within Earth Art and Conceptual Art including site-specificity and the role of new media and the Internet in contemporary art practice will be examined to understand the boundaries of what constitutes the site of collecting. While the artistic concerns and concepts vary within the work presented in this chapter, they all use the structures of these

sites to create meaning through the juxtaposition of elements. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the structure of the artist's collection impacts on the viewer's interpretation of the artwork's meaning. Central to this chapter is the importance of the installation and the archive in contemporary artists' practices.

Chapter Three discusses the narrative function of the object in artists' collections and how these objects, when placed within the collection's site of interrelation, reflect both personal and collective histories. It analyses the way the photograph and the artefact act as mnemonic and metonymic signifiers in the collections of contemporary artists and the relationship this process has with concepts of witness and experience. The chapter examines how experience functions as a medium in contemporary art through the performative aspects of artistic production by exploring the relationship between performance and photography in the practices of American artist Cindy Sherman and Palestinian artist Emily Jacir. Then it will investigate how artists use artefacts as tools of witness in the documentation of experience using Mark Dion and German artist Joseph Beuys as examples.

By examining how these two evidentiary outcomes function as mnemonic and metonymic devices, Chapter Three then defines the photograph as a found object, which can be utilised as a collected artefact, and describes the ways in which the artefact in this sense functions as a personal souvenir for Gerhard Richter and French artist Sophie Calle. This definition of the found object as a souvenir is then expanded by discussing how the object functions as a relic with symbolic and collective significance in the practices of French artists Christian Boltanski and Annette Messager. The chapter ends with an investigation of how the symbolic object and the collection both disrupt a cohesive narrative and a description of how this is utilised by contemporary artists.

Central to this chapter is the use of the installation and the archive by the artists examined. This is significant in positioning the found photograph and object as incomplete, through the object's condition as a material trace or witness to an unknowable and irretrievable event. Furthermore, this chapter identifies the paradoxical state of amnesia and memory that occurs within the collection as also a condition of the object. The argument serves here to demonstrate a trajectory of how

the object functions as an object of knowledge, which when placed within the structure of the collection imparts a narrative that requires interpretation. This chapter argues that, as a result, these types of artists' collections are open-ended, due to the open-ended interpretations of the work rather than a physical condition of being infinite or encyclopaedic.

Chapter Four examines the evolution of the roles of curiosity, travel, and narrative from their function as tools of discovery in the Early Modern cabinet of curiosity to become redefined by the issues of curiosity, chance, and ambiguity within the practices of contemporary artists Susan Hiller, Tacita Dean, and Allen Ruppersberg. To begin with, this chapter will return to the model of the *Wunderkammer* to critique its misuse within contemporary arts writing and curating and to re-evaluate its relevance within contemporary artistic practice. To do this, it will examine the collecting practices of Mark Dion and Englishman Keith Tyson as artists who demonstrate a critical engagement with the strategies of the *Wunderkammer* within their work. It will then reposition the model of the *Wunderkammer* and the systematic collection defined in Chapter One, based on French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss's dual modes of logic, sensible intuition, and scientific knowledge. This chapter argues that the model of the *Wunderkammer* restores a lack of order to the systematic collection and that both models reflect the two modes of logic developed by Lévi-Strauss. Additionally, the synthesis of these two approaches is integral to the process of constructing artwork that utilises collecting as both a tool of discovery and the construction of a narrative. To demonstrate, Hiller's artistic methodology will be examined to investigate how these two modes inform the construction and reception of the work as a form of inquiry.

This chapter will then investigate how curiosity, so central to the *Wunderkammer*, is still related to contemporary artists' collections by the presentation of the familiar as strange through ambiguous narratives in the practices of Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg. This chapter revisits the use of found objects and free association as strategies of artists' collections and further identifies the strategies of chance and wandering that aid in the unexpected construction of the work, inviting the intuitive and poetic into the social, cultural, and historical engagement these artists have. This chapter finally defines the site of the collection as a chronotope, a term central to

theories of narrative formations. However, within the practices of Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg the narratives created by their collections are deconstructed and open-ended, relying upon the slippages in translation that occur from textual to optical registers within Ruppersberg's work and the non-linear illegibility within Dean's work. The purpose of this key chapter is to examine the confluence between intuitive and scientific modes of collecting and the ways in which this translates into curiosity within an artwork through the appropriation of aspects of the *Wunderkammer* and to determine the types of narratives that this creates.

Conclusion

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to contribute to current discourses around artists' collections in order to examine the types of practices that use the collection as a narrative tool. Central to this argument is the model of the *Wunderkammer* which balances the overtly political, bureaucratic, and systematic collections artists have engaged with in the latter half of the twentieth century by its intuitive, idiosyncratic, and heterogeneous nature. However, what this dissertation has determined is that both models of collecting are integral to the works of the artists discussed.

Relics of All Things Precious argues that it is through collecting that the artist creates a specific historical environment in which to position their work. This allows for the inclusion of information, images, and objects that are not generally associated with the documentation of history due in part to their throw away or mundane nature, to become placed within historical discourse due to their selection by the artist. Furthermore, this dissertation proposes that today's artists are wanderers responding to the objects, images, information, and spaces they experience and that rather than seeking an absolute truth, or universal meta-narrative, artists are seeking to document theirs and others' experiences with these things in a way that exposes the psychology of inhabiting a world that is defined by complex social, cultural, and historical relationships.

Chapter One

Curious Spaces: Travel, discovery, and collections

> Not a day would pass by without discovering some new promontory, some untrodden pasture, some unsuspected vale, where I might remain among woods and precipices lost and forgotten. I would give you, and two or three more, the clue of my labyrinth: nobody else should be conscious of its entrance. Full of such agreeable dreams, I rambled about the meads, scarcely knowing which way I was going; sometimes a spangled fly led me astray, and, oftener, my own strange fancies. Between both, I was perfectly bewildered, and should never have found my boat again, had not an old German naturalist, who was collecting fossils on the cliffs, directed me to it.[68]

English writer and traveller William Beckford's Eighteenth-Century account of wandering through the unfamiliar natural landscape of the Rhine, in Germany, provides several key metaphors about the relationships between travel, discovery, and collecting as an experience of conflated opposition: being simultaneously physical and psychological, lost and found, second hand account and real experience. Beckford's journey operates on two levels: on the exteriority of the corporeal, and on the interiority of the mental, as memory but also as fantasy. He describes being led astray by both his curiosity of the spangled fly and his own imagination through the landscape. By following the interior map of his 'fancies', Beckford navigates corporeal space until he is lost, finding his way by assistance of the German naturalist, collecting specimens, the epitome of the Enlightenment's rational taxonomic connoisseur. Opposed to the wandering of Beckford, the German naturalist's systematic navigation of the environment through the act of collecting, suggests his knowledge of the field of his enquiry and that through the classification and ordering of details, space (both exterior and interior) can be mapped. This account provides a metaphor for two different but equally important strategies of

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[68] William Beckford's account of his travel through the Rhine region on his Grand Tour. Letter VIII, July 13, 1781, Beckford, W, *Dreams, waking thoughts, and incidents*, Project Gutenberg, 2005, retrieved 9 July 2011, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/drwt10h.htm#startoftext>.

discovery, offering insight into the mechanisms of artistic collecting proposed by this chapter and, indeed, by the dissertation: one is a rational approach to the environment, the other is an intuitive conflation between a physical location and the psyche, where being led astray creates serendipitous events.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical context in which to define two different collecting methodologies, the *Wunderkammer* model and the systematic model, and to analyse their relationship to the world. This chapter will specifically focus on the influence the *Wunderkammer* model had on artistic practices in the beginning of the twentieth century as an alternative strategy of collecting that counteracted an increasingly ordered, controlled, and systematised social environment, from everyday life to the city itself. Starting with the Early Modern period (fifteenth to eighteenth centuries) and the discovery of the 'New World', the section on 'The encyclopaedic world: Systems of subjectivity in the cabinet of curiosities' will examine the Early Modern cabinet of curiosity and its relationship to the travel writing of the time as a model of collection that relied on curiosity, narrative, and travel. The section will define the central characteristics of this model and contrast these against the 'systematic' model of collecting developed in the eighteenth century. The following section, 'The vanishing frontier: Travel and the souvenir', will discuss how settlement and urbanisation contributed to the disappearance of the American frontier during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and how this was reflected in collecting practices. It will also discuss the emergence of photography as a tool of witness in the creation of souvenirs documenting this vanishing landscape. 'Mapping spaces of interiority: the new frontier' will then compare this period of change with the modernisation of Paris's urban landscape in order to introduce the specific strategies of navigation, chance and collection developed by the Dadaists, Surrealists, and Situationists, who sought to disrupt the urban landscape through an engagement with the psyche. These strategies will be compared to the characteristics of the cabinet of curiosities in order to establish a continued engagement with this model in the twentieth century, providing a background for subsequent chapters.

While the history of collecting did not solely emerge from Fifteenth-Century Europe, this is the era and location in which curiosity, travel, and collecting flourished.[69] This 'Age of Exploration' coincided with the inquisitiveness of the Renaissance, and with it, the expansion of the known world and accessibility to its resources. Much of the exploration that occurred was undertaken in the name or at least in the service of power, whether that was for Imperialism, commerce, or religion, or any combination of all three. What also emerged was a quest for knowledge. This quest was not without its ideologies associated with cultural dominance, religious righteousness and economic might, but what also emerged during this time was a societal validation of curiosity and with that came a drive to explore. However, exploration existed as a unique experience of interiority, available only to those who undertook the journey and had the means to do so. As a result the secular *viateur*[70] was instrumental in translating the wonder felt at the multitude of possibilities inherent in a world that was still being explored. They did this through the collection of unique objects and the documentation of their experiences, establishing new 'modes of enquiry into the natural world'.[71] The subjectivity inherent to this form of enquiry, and the collection of 'evidence', both written and physical, forms the next section of this chapter, as the model of encyclopaedic knowledge in the cabinet of curiosities is examined.

The encyclopaedic world: systems of subjectivity in the cabinet of curiosities

> With collecting it is decisive that the object is released from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest possible relationship with its equivalents. This is the diametric opposite of use, and stands under the curious category of completeness. What is this "completeness"? It is a grandiose attempt to transcend the totally irrational quality of a mere being there through integration into a new, specifically created historical system – the collection. And for the true collector every single thing in this system

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[69] For a concise description of earlier societies that collected, see Chapter 2: A brief history of collecting in R Belk, *Collecting in a consumer society*, Routledge, New York, 1995, pp. 22-64.
[70] A *viateur* is an Early Modern traveller.
[71] W Williams, ''Out of the frying pan…': curiosity, danger and the poetics of witness in the Renaissance traveller's tale' in R J W Evans & A Marr (eds), *Curiosity and wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot, England & Burlington, VT, 2006, p. 25.

becomes an encyclopedia of all knowledge of the age, of the landscape, the industry, the owner from which it derives.[72]

German literary and cultural critic Walter Benjamin refers to the collection as a historical system that specifically functions as an encyclopaedia of a particular time, place, culture and, most importantly for the purpose of this chapter, owner. This owner can be a single person, a collective, or an institution, which 'possesses' the things in the collection and refers doubly to the object's original owner and to the collector. Collections therefore, through possession, become a site of relationships between the subject (collector) and object (thing collected). A collection is organised according to the ideals set by the collector and as a result reflects the collector's historical, cultural, societal, and personal position; in this way a collection is subjective. Benjamin also states that 'the phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner. Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter'.[73] This suggests that meaning within a collection is created by the placement of an object within a system of subjectivity and their specific relationship to a subject – the 'I'. American cultural theorist Douglas Crimp elaborates upon Benjamin's idea of the private collection, discussing the contemporary private collection that is, 'amassed by those "stupid and passive" collectors whose objects exist for them only insofar as they literally possess and use them'.[74] In opposition to this countertype is Benjamin's 'personal' collection, a detailed, specific form of practical memory that views the past through the intricacies of historical materialism, diametrically opposed to the eternal, unwavering, meta-narrative of history.[75]

Benjamin's ideal 'personal' collector can be seen in the *curieux* of the Early Modern period. This French term is used to describe people who were curious about the world and sought to create an encyclopaedic collection of their experience through both literary accounts and collections. English literary historian Neil Kenny

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[72] W Benjamin, *The arcades project*, trans. H Eiland & K McLaughlin, 3rd edn, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 204 – 205.

[73] W Benjamin, 'Unpacking my library: a talk about book collecting', in Arendt, H (ed), *Walter Benjamin: illuminations*, trans. H Zohn, Schocken Books, New York, 1969, p 67.

[74] D Crimp, *On the museum's ruins*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993, p. 203.

[75] ibid., p. 204.

recognises that curiosity operated in the Early Modern period in two ways: literal, as in material objects or curiosities; and metaphorical, as in a discursive subject such as a curious collector.[76] Furthermore, Kenny identifies that curiosity was expressed through two distinct but intertwined tendencies: the collection and the narrative.[77] A historical inquiry into the *curieux* is thus really an inquiry into curiosity and how it shaped the metaphor of collecting and narrative, through the importance of the new, the drive for exploration, and the subjectivity of collecting. Two systems of collection that emerged in tandem during the fifteenth to the eighteenth century significant to evaluating the role of discovery, exploration and narrative on collecting are travel literature (the collation of experience into a single volume) and the cabinet of curiosities (the placement of singularities into a cohesive whole).[78] These collections are based on a personal subjective and idiosyncratic relationship to the world through a specific encyclopaedic endeavour that attempted to gather everything within the world into the microcosm of the collection. As the boundaries of the world were expanding through travel, with the discovery of the Americas and the creation of new routes to the East, so too was the *curieux*'s encyclopaedic project reflecting an ever-expanding cosmology of knowledge seen through material artefacts.

Early Modern cabinets of curiosities existed as aesthetic and poetic collections with shifting structures and organisation. Whereas the collection of travel tales became logically arranged within the catalogue of the library based upon similarities and regularities, objects collected within the cabinet were presented according to difference and contrast to provide the greatest possible expression of surprise and wonder in the viewer through the juxtaposition of elements.[79] Known as *Wunderkammern* (cabinets of wonder) and *Kunstkammern* (cabinets of art), the most grandiose of these 'cabinets' were often housed within specifically built rooms and

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[76] N Kenny, 'The metaphorical collecting of curiosities in early modern France and Germany', in R J W Evans & A Marr (eds), *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot, England & Burlington, VT, 2006, p. 43.

[77] ibid., pp. 44 – 45.

[78] While this chapter will discuss travel literature, it will do so to emphasise the subjective and even fictitious nature of experience and witness, the re-collection and re-purposing of previous accounts as a form of appropriation and collage and the didactic and encyclopaedic presentation of knowledge within a collected structure, as the dissertation is concerned with visual rather than literary strategies of collection and narrative.

[79] R Belk, *Collecting in a consumer society*, Routledge, New York, 1995, p. 31.

galleries rather than being used as pieces of furniture, which allowed for some of the most extreme displays of contrast, such as the placement of 'a "giant's" (dinosaur's) bone and the bone of a bat' together[80], or the unusual positioning of the crocodile amongst other much smaller marine animals in the engraving of Italian apothecary Ferrante Imperato's collection in , *Dell'Historia Naturale (1599),* (Fig. 25).

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

The classification and presentation of objects in cabinets of curiosities were determined by the private collector, however they generally consisted of the rudimentary separation between two distinctions: *naturalia*, such as specimens of minerals, fauna, flora, fossils and ethnographic artefacts; and *artificialia*, such as automata, clocks, scientific instruments and tools, weapons, and *objets d'art* (jewellery, sculpture, and paintings). These categories have had shifting prominence throughout history with varying distinctions between high and low culture. The inclusion of artworks, and especially painting, within objects of the curious and wondrous, positioned art as both a unique and prized object and also embedded it in the spectacle of consumer culture, with German artist Frans Francken II depicting the virtuosity of manmade works of art displayed alongside shells and money in *Kunst- und Raritätenkammer (Chamber of Art and Curiosities) (1636)* (Fig. 26).

Polish historian Krzysztof Pomian describes the collecting practices of the Early Modern period as seen through the cabinet of curiosities, as a material manifestation of a period of time 'in between the theological strictures of the medieval Church and

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[80] J Kenseth, 'Kunst- and Wunderkammer', J Kensth (ed.), *The age of the marvellous*, Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, & Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, 1991. p. 249, cited in R Belk, *Collecting in a consumer society*, ibid.
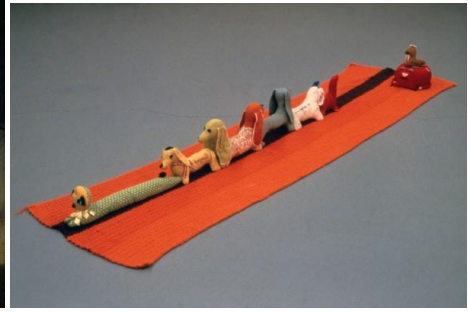
Fig. 27   Fig. 28

the epistemological tyranny of the Scientific Revolution'.[81] Pomian believes, like Benjamin, that the objects placed within the system of a collection are removed from their use value and can therefore represent other things, much like the allegorical *vanitas* by Dutch artist Balthasar van der Ast, *Still Life with Fruit and Flowers (c.1620 – 21)* (Fig. 27), where the flowers and fruit covered in insects symbolise the transient nature of life or the installation work of American artist Mike Kelley, *Arena #10 (Dogs) (1990)* (Fig. 28), in which the positioning of the stuffed toys subverts child-like innocence by suggesting competition, immolation, or sexual deviancy. For Benjamin, the collection represents the reflection of the world and its structure within the object through both the object's external history (provenance, economic and cultural value, etc.) and the 'surprising' connections that occur in the inherent order of the objects in a system that 'come together, for the true collector, in every single one of his possessions, to form a whole magic encyclopedia, a world order, whose outline is the *fate* of his object'.[82] For Pomian, collected objects 'act as a bridge between *verba* and *res*: that of which we speak and that which we see, between the universe of discourse and the world of visual perception'.[83] Therefore, in the Renaissance, the collection is already a mediator between discursive and visual meaning making and specifically conflates spiritual belief and scientific knowledge. Anthropologist Anthony Alan Shelton states that 'a large part of the justification for collections in the Renaissance was borrowed from medieval scholasticism, its ideas concerning the innate meaning of things and the nature of

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[81] K Pomian, 'Curiosity and modern science' in N Gomez (ed.), *Nouvelles Curiosites/ New Curiosities*, Digne-les-Beins, 2003, cited in A Marr, 'Introduction', ibid., p. 9.

[82] W Benjamin, *The arcades project*, op. cit., p. 207.

[83] K Pomian, *Collectors and curiosities. Paris and Venice, 1500 – 1800*, Cambridge, MA, 1990, cited in A Marr, 'Introduction', loc cit.

revelation, and its vision of the relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm'.[84] This microcosm represented a theatre of the world, a space that could function endlessly (like the world it represented) through its interrelations.

Specifically, this theatre of the world was designed to map the material output of God, whose creation of the cosmos humankind could only imitate through the production of manmade objects, which however skilful were paled by the diversity of the natural world. When the importance of the creator shifted from the religious/sacred to the scientific/secular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, revelation came to mean discovery of knowledge in a way that included but was separate from the wonder experienced in God's creation. Furthermore, the meaning of things expanded from a model of Divine purpose to include a complex mixture of use, history, and personal experience, and making the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm about mapping space (physical, internal and cultural) as a way of seeking systems of order in the chaos and possibility of the world, the rationalist systems of navigation, charting and taxonomic classification provided models of delineating space and consistent ways of presenting objects of curiosity that could be experienced empirically. These are measurable ways of understanding the world, providing formulaic systems of demonstration and understanding that could be easily replicated and has as its ideology a utopian vision of the structure of the world and its limits.

Central to this mapping of space was the phenomenon of travel, which during the Early Modern period appeared to have no boundaries due to the discovery of new lands and things. Travel had a significant impact on the creation of Sixteenth-Century collections from cabinets of curiosity to travel writing, which combined with an Early Modern mindset that viewed empirical evidence, faith, and mythic thought as equally significant created a unique perspective of narrative conflating the factual and the fictive. The way this factual ambiguity existed within the cabinet of curiosity is best highlighted by investigating the travel writing of the time, which took the form of two distinct genres: pilgrimages and secular accounts. Pilgrimage

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[84] AA Shelton, 'Cabinets of transgression: Renaissance collections and the incorporation of the New World', in J Elsner & R Cardinal (eds), *The cultures of collecting,* Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1994, p. 181.

accounts were devised to be a travel guide, accompanying pilgrims as an instructive text that established codes of travel, the route to the Holy Land, and important devotional information.[85] Secular accounts of peregrination, written in the first person, were not only instructive by providing a guide for others to follow, but were also entertaining tales with the writer's curiosity leading them to experience varying states of fortune, peril and death, strange landscapes, fantastic beasts, exotic cultures and rare objects, all singularities of the possibility and diversity of the world. They provided a metaphor of the mythological hero's journey, of experience with the fantastic, near death (for those who live to tell the tale), metamorphosis and fame, made plausible by a desire to know about the newly discovered world by the average person whose only link to travel is the writer's account.

Williams proposes that the confluence between curiosity and danger (both physical and spiritual) in Renaissance thought adds validity to the *viateur's* travelogue by presenting a detailed account of witness, specifically describing the travails that the author experiences himself and those that befall others, the danger (or perceived danger) of which authenticates him as 'the figure of witness' and experience, validating his account to others.[86] Such tales of dangers overcome are described by French writer André Thevet in his encyclopaedic compendium, *Cosmographie Universelle* (1575), as a way of endorsing the importance of personal experience through the encounter with peril, as not only evidence but also authority. Williams states that 'the ability to alert the reader to any number of moments when "the author [was] in danger of his life", and yet survived to tell the tale, makes of him, Thevet argues, not only the owner of his own story, but also an object of curiosity; it makes of his text a cabinet of singular wonder'.[87]

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[85] Europe has a much longer history of pilgrimage than secular tours, but what separates this type of travel from the type discussed in this chapter, is the religious, social and moral conventions pilgrims were required to adhere to including, following specific routes to the Holy Land, obeying rules such as fraternising only with other pilgrims and going so far as to deter pilgrims from shopping, learning the language, looking around and discouraging them from deviation and curiosity lest it lead to temptation. Furthermore, any accounts were specifically to be written in the third person to avoid embellishment and hubris. For more information about the laws of pilgrimage, see Williams, op. cit., pp. 28 - 30.
[86] Williams, op. cit., p. 24.
[87] ibid., p. 34.

One of the paradoxes of this era was the way in which factual and fictional events and observations intermingled in travelogues. During this time, it was not unusual for obscure or sensationalist written accounts to be appropriated and integrated into subsequent narratives.[88] This form of collecting literary accounts into a singular compendium of previous texts in the form of the cosmographic travelogue sets a precedent for Gustave Flaubert's story, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (1874), which presents itself as a series of travel accounts serving as a metaphor of temptation. What it really presents through the fantastic imagery of the temptations are detailed literary descriptions based upon illustrations from obscure books; it is the first text that self-consciously references in its construction the longer history of its method of communication. The world of experience becomes internalised from one of physical space to one of the library and of encounter with books rather than events. French philosopher Michel Foucault sees *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* as a response to the 'experience of the fantastic' and the 'discovery of a new imaginative space' that 'evolves from the accuracy of knowledge, and its treasures lie dormant in documents'.[89] This 'imaginative space' of self-reflection becomes an important aspect of art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as artistic practices begin to explore the proliferation of archival material and position it as a site of the extraordinary.

While the appropriation of other's tales in travel writing was common, so too was the embellished and even completely fictitious accounts of voyages.[90] Such narrative licence was taken during the Early Modern period that French writer and statesman Lord Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (who contributed to the emergence of scepticism) wrote about concerns of the intellectual property of others and fictions dressed up as truth in travel narratives.[91] This concern foresaw the tension between the objective/rational/scientific and the subjective/fantastic/fictitious, which reflected the growing secularisation and separation of scientific (empirical and taxonomic) and

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[88] Thevet is known to have written in verbatim, parts of Erasmus's *Naufragium* (1523), Bertrand de la Borderie's *Discours du voyage de Constantinoble* (1537 – 38) and Rabelias's *Quart Livre* (1546) in his *Cosmographie Universelle* and he was not alone in this practice. ibid., p. 32.

[89] M Foucault, 'Fantasia of the Library', in D F Bouchard (ed), *Language, counter-memory, practice: selected essays and interviews*, trans. D F Bouchard & S Simon, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1977, p. 90.

[90] Thevet, didn't escape this criticism either, as he was also accused of publishing accounts of journeys he never took.

[91] Williams, op. cit., p. 28.

artistic (curious and intuitive) modes of enquiry that occurred during the Enlightenment. During this time the spirit of enquiry that curiosity represented developed into scientific investigation. The collections of singularities from cabinets of curiosities became legitimised as specimens through the institution of the Museum and the rationality of science, as the encyclopaedic view of the world favoured by the Renaissance became the Enlightenment's specific classification of disciplines, separating science from art.

The history of art is aligned with the history of collecting and curiosity. It is documented that writers and artists were among the diverse *curieux* that collected, incorporating the singularities found during the Age of Exploration into their artwork.[92] The encyclopaedic collections of the period were reflected in several ways, as illustration, documentation and allegory, and through travel, technological, and stylistic discoveries disseminated throughout Europe. During this time, artists created engravings to accompany the fabulous accounts of travel writers and to depict important cabinets of curiosities and documented the specimens discovered on voyages, depicting the landscape, flora, fauna and indigenous people as part of the encyclopaedic project. Furthermore, they depicted the 'academic' enquiry of the times, with paintings such as *Cognoscenti in a Room Hung with Pictures* (c.1620) attributed to an anonymous member of the Flemish School (Fig. 29), demonstrating the study and prestige associated with these collections.

Fig. 29   Fig. 30

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[92] Shelton, op. cit. p. 181.

Collections became important allegorical tools for painters who created tromp l'oeil paintings that reflected the macrocosm of the world in the microcosm of the encyclopaedic cabinet, notably Flemish-Italian artist Domenico Remps' *A Cabinet of Curiosity* (c.1690) (Fig. 30). With still life painting of the time, the objects depicted had specific meanings available to the initiated viewer, in such ideas as *memento mori*, expressed through the complex relationships between the items in the picture, much like the syntax of a sentence creating a theatre of inter-relation. The metaphor of the theatre relates to the presentation of a world in miniature that has been source of artistic engagement and strategy from the Renaissance to contemporary art in what American art theorist Briony Fer refers to as tableau. Specifically, Fer describes the 'tableaux as a pictorial idiom' that is constructed within installation and documented by photography.[93]

However, during the Early Modern period, criticism of being fictitious did little to harm authors or the emerging genre of travel literature. At this time the collection of secular accounts and singularities was still subject to the 'I' – the personal rather than the public or institutional (institutions such as universities and museums were still in their infancy). The language in such accounts, while descriptive, is specifically not objective and is not expected to fulfil a 'truth' but a 'possibility' and is a construction of the writer's reality as seen through the use of the first person within the narrative. Its function is to personalise the experience through its informality, removing the distance between the narrator and the reader allowing the reader to experience the adventure with the writer. Ironically, fiction fuelled the interest in curiosity and spurred on more explorers to seek out the objects of the tales. Foucault has argued that history of any kind is not without its subjective and even fictitious narrative, stating that, 'one "fictions" history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true; one "fictions" a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth'.[94] While Foucault sees all history as subjective and truth and

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[93] See Chapter 5, Tableaux in B Fer, *The infinite line: remaking art after modernism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2004, p. 87.

[94] Michael Foucault argued that there is no such thing as historical truth (i.e. the position of truth as being objective and monadic) due to the subjectivity of history's construction (i.e. that it is always based upon the present context of the individual writing it). See M Foucault, 'The History of Sexuality', in C Gordon (ed.), *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972 – 1977*, trans. C Gordon, L Marshall, J Mepham & K Soper, The Harvester Press, Brighton, Great Britain, 1980, pp. 183 –193. For an understanding of how historical truth is constructed, see J Kastner & S

knowledge as based on a personal construction of reality, the *curieux* of the Early Modern period had no such distinctions. This does not mean that they didn't conform to this model (travel writers such as Thevet demonstrate this), however, at the time the importance of being 'curious' took priority over a desire to be accurate.

Like the narrative of the travel account, the importance of the history of an object in the collections of the Early Modern period was based upon the spectacular narrative it embodied, such as the procurement of a 'unicorn's horn', a relic of a saint's mummified finger, or a carved cherrystone depicting a host of angels. The concern with authenticity when viewed through this type of collecting becomes unnecessary as the experience of the mythological and magical blurs the boundaries between imagination and witness, working together to create wonder. Wonder at the *possibility* (rather than probability) of the world and with it the endless and infinite permutations of, in this case, God's creative potential and the vast and limitless space that this concept occupies physically. The encyclopaedic collection consequently acts as more than a mirror of the known world (or the idea of a defined and therefore complete collection) but instead has mutable boundaries that expand with the discovery of new spaces, simultaneously and paradoxically playing out the relationship between the infinity of singularities (which are by definition, non repeatable) and possibilities and the finite ability to collect everything. What this presented was an expansion of the known world that simultaneously created new spaces for exploration and defined the limits of the habitable world.

As the worldview expanded, such as with the discovery and exploration of the New World, the new territories and the natural and manmade wonders that were found there were incorporated into existing systems of classification (again as diverse and specific as the *curieux* who collected). Even these systems of classification were not definitive – their boundaries shifted based upon the collection as its own organism and subject to the newest addition and the subtle and not so subtle changes that occur culturally over time; for example, the *Kunstkammer* of Cosimo de' Medici was repeatedly reorganised throughout several generations of de' Medici owners with inventories of objects showing not only their taxonomic classifications but also their

Najafi, 'Historical Amnesias: an interview with Paul Connerton', *Cabinet*, issue 42, Summer 2011, pp. 80 – 86.

locations in conceptual rather than systematic groupings.[95] Rather than challenge the identity and ideology of a Eurocentric, Christian, and civilised culture that the collection espoused, the integration of New World artefacts were not treated as the 'Other' in their classification and were approached with the same criteria as other objects within the collection, one of a subjective, personal aesthetic choice. This was based upon the object's formal characteristics, its perceived magical attributes and mythological provenance and its relationship with the identity of the collector.

This makes collections of the Early Modern period simultaneously embody the souvenir, the fetish, and the systematic as defined by English cultural theorist, Susan Pearce in her book, *Museums, Objects and Collections*. Pearce defines collections of souvenirs as those that move 'public history into the personal sphere', speaking of 'events that are not repeatable but are reportable' through the materiality of the mnemonic object.[96] American literary theorist Susan Stewart expands upon the importance of the souvenir as a symbolic object of narrative, linking with how travel writing 'functions to miniaturize and interiorize those distanced experiences which remain outside contemporary lived relations. The tourist seeks out objects and scenes, and the relation between the object and its sight is continued, indeed articulated, in the operation of the souvenir'.[97] Like the souvenir, fetishistic collections also embody an attempt to 'create a satisfactory private universe' for the collector, however the universe that is created by the collection is one of a 'possessive but worshipful attitude towards his objects'.[98] Both the souvenir and the fetishistic collection are organised according to feeling rather than logic. Systematic collections however, are formed by 'the imposition of ideas of classification and seriality on the external world' through the 'selection of examples intended to stand in for all the others of their kind and to complete a set', presented as a didactic relationship with the viewer.[99] Early modern *Wunderkammern* inhabited the uneasy

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[95] A Turpin, 'The New World collections of Duke Cosimo I de'Medici and their role in the creation of a *Kunst-* and *Wunderkammer* in the Palazzo Vecchio, in R J W Evans & A Marr (eds), *Curiosity and wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot, England & Burlington, VT, 2006, pp. 66 – 70.
[96] S Pearce, *Museums, objects, and collections*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C., 1992, p. 72.
[97] S Stewart, *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*, 9th edn, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2005, p. 146.
[98] Pearce, loc. cit., p. 84.
[99] ibid., pp. 87 – 88.

space of being both a personalised embodiment of desire and nostalgia and an empirical evidence of a cosmology. This ability of the cabinet of curiosity to exemplify multiple definitions and purposes of collecting creates a site of discovery and inter-relation that incorporates interior and exterior, logical and intuitive models.
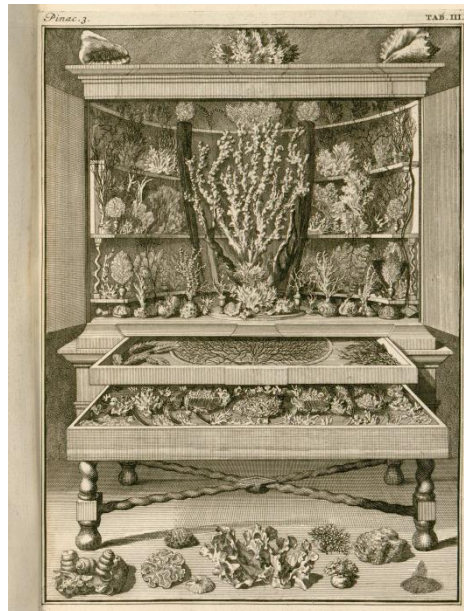
Fig. 31

It is important here to discuss the shift that occurred during the Enlightenment, which saw collections of wonder become collections of rationality, asserting an institutional power over knowledge and history. Cabinets of curiosities or *Wunderkammern* are generally seen as the origins of the modern museum. This can be demonstrated by the engravings depicting Dutch merchant Levinus Vincent's collection of *naturalia* and *artificialia* from the book *Wondertooneel der Natuur (Wonder Theatre of Nature) (Tome 2) (1715)* (Fig. 31), where the visual heterogeneity of display seen in earlier engravings develops into more systematic forms of presentation with, for example, corals being housed together. However, conceptually and structurally, the cabinet of curiosities embodies the antithesis of the museum, through its selection of objects and its system of classification. The public institution of the museum (as opposed to the private *Wunderkammer*) is political in its taxonomy, which upholds cultural ideals, favours specific forms of logic, portrays selected histories, and is instructive and didactic. 'The late Renaissance type of collection', Crimp asserts, 'did not *evolve* into the modern museum. Rather it was

dispersed'.[100] Cabinets of curiosity provided material 'rarities' that were distributed under the new rational and political system of classification of the museum and its specialised departments that began in the Enlightenment. These museums reflected a new form of education that saw the subjective and cosmologic project of the *Wunderkammer* as outmoded, favouring a logical, scientific empiricism and specialisation to achieve true knowledge.

The power structure of the museum remained unchallenged until the institutional critique of artists such as Belgian Marcel Broodthaers, Swedish Claes Oldenburg and Italian Claudio Costa during the 1960s, disrupted the hegemony of knowledge by incorporating the absurd, the populist and the mundane into the museum reflecting alternative histories. However, previous to the institutional critiques of the 1960s, Dadaist and Surrealist artists during the early twentieth century were engaging with the model of the *Wunderkammer* as an alternative to a systematic and rational approach to enquiry. This response was based both upon a profusion of material production and destruction that occurred with the modernisation of European cities and World War I. As with the *curieux* of the Early Modern period, the relationship with the landscape during this time was integral to collecting practices. This Twentieth-Century development was based upon an important shift in the relationship between society and the environment that occurred during the nineteenth century with the conversion of the natural world into urbanised landscapes and the emergence of new technologies such as photography.

The vanishing frontier: Travel and the souvenir

The European vision of the New World was one of a space of discovery, freedom, and opportunity. The Americas provided a landscape, the American frontier, that could still be explored even after the circumnavigation of the globe defined the limits of the Earth. This idea of the frontier was an abstract rather than a physical reality in the minds of Europeans, based upon a collective longing for a Garden of Eden that was motivated by the overcrowded and impoverished conditions on the Continent. Paradoxically, this mythology of the American frontier in the eighteenth and

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[100] Crimp, op. cit., p. 225.

nineteenth centuries was based upon a nostalgic portrayal of the virgin landscape that existed simultaneously with the industrialised development of it.[101] This shift was achieved due to new technologies, namely the photograph, which provided a way for what American historian Ray Allen Billington calls 'image makers'[102] to document the landscape and its people and bring it back to European and American city centres as souvenirs. One such 'image maker' who was instrumental to the production of the
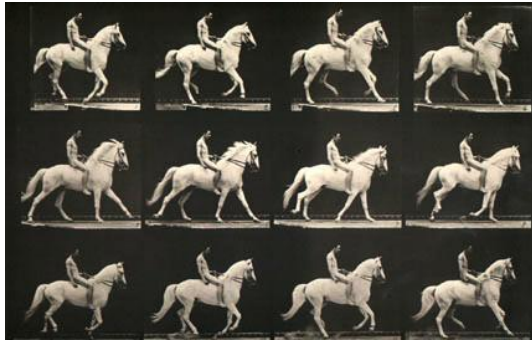
Fig. 32   Fig. 33

commoditisation and nostalgia of this myth was English-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who is best known for his sequential photographs of animals in motion that were a precursor to the motion picture, e.g. *Man on a Horse (Plate 617)* from *Animal Locomotion (1887)* (Fig. 32). Muybridge, who was based in the United States, produced souvenirs of the natural wonders of the western frontier, such as Yosemite National Park, in the form of photographs, e.g. *Mirror Lake, Valley of the Yosemite (1872)* (Fig. 33) and stereoscopes (a type of photograph that when looked at through a special viewer produced a three dimensional image), for example, *Contemplation Rock, Glacier Point (1385), (1872)* (Fig. 34). These souvenir photographs and stereoscopes of the wild landscape represented both a shift towards a virtual, panoramic experience and the nostalgic *memento mori* of a metaphoric space that had only recently fallen into rapid decline with the advent of mass industrialisation.

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[101] L G Corrin, 'Mark Dion's project: a natural history of wonder and a wonderful history of nature', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & M Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, pp. 48 – 49.
[102] R A Billington, *Land of savagery, land of promise: the European image of the American Frontier in the nineteenth century*, W W Norton & Company, New York, 1981.

Fig. 34

The stereoscopic cards provided a medium that gave representation a convincing realism, fuelling the 'passionate desire to see the world represented as compellingly as possible', transporting the viewer someplace else.[103] The scrapbook and photo album simultaneously provided a 'way of ordering one's family and world into a visual narrative' that acted as family histories and, in the case of Muybridge's photographs of Yosemite National Park, travel souvenirs.[104] These souvenirs created a phantasm of a previously lived (or imagined) encounter of travel and the landscape by the ingenuity of the stereoscope, immersing the viewer in the experience without leaving their immediate location and in a way creating an interior imagined journey. They became a nostalgic and intimate mnemonic device, both documenting and mythologising the existence of a disappearing space and embedding it in collective consciousness.

The disappearing space of the American frontier is an important bridge in the understanding of the shift from the expansiveness of the world and the space for travel and discovery in the Early Modern era to the highly mapped and discovered landscape of the twentieth century that seemingly presents no new spaces of discovery. The decline in the American frontier metaphorically signalled the end of the un-mapped, virgin landscape. With the industrialised cityscape expanding into the natural world, the early modern concept of the *curieux* and the *viateur* shifted as the idea of unexplored space disappeared from Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century life, removing the context of an Early Modern sense of curiosity and wonder and instead replacing it with a mapped urban landscape, mundane and crowded. In other

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[103] R Solnit, *River of shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the technological wild west*, Viking Penguin, New York, 2003, p. 41.
[104] ibid., p. 132.

words the city became a collapsed space of accumulation, fragmentation, evolution and devolution, reused through generations of inhabitants. However, even in these conditions new ways of navigating space began to emerge. This period saw a transfer of the space of exploration from an exterior model to an interior one, reflecting the increasingly populated and cultivated Western world that began to emerge during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In his book, *The Arcades Project* (1972), Benjamin explores the role of the Parisian arcade as one of the most important architectural features of the nineteenth century, defining the urban landscape, changing the way people moved, interacted, consumed and lived. An excerpt from *An Illustrated Guide to Paris* puts the case thus:

> These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Lining both sides of these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the *passage* is a city, a world in miniature.[105]

These arcades, like the *Wunderkammer,* reflected a world in miniature, however, the world it reflected was centred around the commerce of luxury goods all contained within the controlled space of the interior. It is within this interior realm that Benjamin's archetypal figures of the *flâneur* and collector emerged as products of this bourgeois material culture. For Benjamin, the arcades or *passages* represent a shift into a modernity that was consumed by the innovation and progress that it represented. In fact, during the nineteenth nentury, under Baron Haussmann's urban planning,[106] Paris became a city of transition and loss in which decay and progress sat side by side. As a cultural hub, Paris was significant in the development of the avant-garde's strategies of subversion, seeking to determine new ways of interacting with the world that liberated the individual from the confines of societal, political, and economic restraints. Artists working in Paris in the nineteenth and early

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[105] Benjamin, *The arcades project*, op. cit., p. 3.

[106] Baron Georges Eugene Haussmann was appointed by Napoleon III to reorganise the city of Paris in order to better facilitate economic growth, control traffic and revolution proof the city. Subsequently, in the 1860s, Haussman demolished much of the 'Old' Paris (such as the slums and winding laneways) and constructed the open wide boulevards, bridges and parks that characterise what is referred to as the 'New' Paris.

twentieth centuries appropriated the roles of collectors and *flâneurs*, destabilising the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and changing the structure of modernity by responding to the urban consumerist environment.
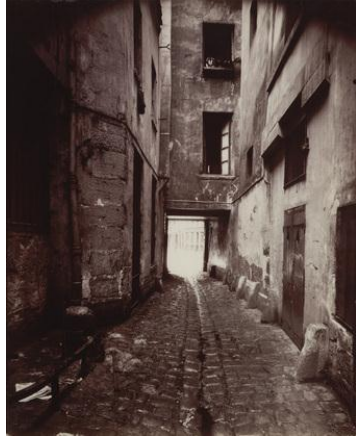
Fig. 35

Fig. 36

French photographer Eugène Atget who referred to himself as an 'archivist' and 'author-publisher' rather than a photographer, embarked upon the encyclopaedic project of documenting Paris during this time of transition, specifically as a resource for artists during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.[107] Using techniques that were 'old fashioned' and anachronistic, Atget's photographs recorded the vanishing 'Old' Paris as a symbol of obsolescence, but also of a past destroyed by modernisation and urbanisation, such as *Courtyard, 22 rue Quincampoix (1912)* (Fig. 35) and *Fête du Trône (1925)* (Fig. 36). Atget systematically collected images of the remnants of a disappearing Parisian way of life in a manner akin to an anthropologist collecting cultural traces, but his poetic portrayal of the city and its inhabitants suggest a more personal motivation of preservation.

Fig. 37

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[107] I Schaffner, 'Deep Storage', in Schaffner, I & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 18 and p. 45.

Atget's images of Paris are similar in some ways to Muybridge's photographs of Yosemite National Park and San Francisco, as in *Panoramic San Francisco from California Street Hill (1877)* (Fig. 37), both of which document a moment in time that became memorialised through nostalgic mementos of a disappearing landscape engulfed by the new technologies and the progress of the industrial revolution. However, whereas Muybridge's photographs were panoramic and majestic, Atget's photographs were the exact opposite, collecting and documenting in detail all aspects of modernity in everyday life.[108] As a serial compendium, Atget's photographs can be aligned with other artistic projects of archival documentation such as German artists Bernd and Hilla Becher's water towers or 'anonymous sculptures', such as *Water Towers (Wassertürme) (1980)* (Fig. 38). These projects share several similarities: the photographic documentation and preservation of obsolescence, the systematic approach to historical knowledge, and the tension between a desire for objective neutrality and the creation of personally, historically, and politically charged works.[109]
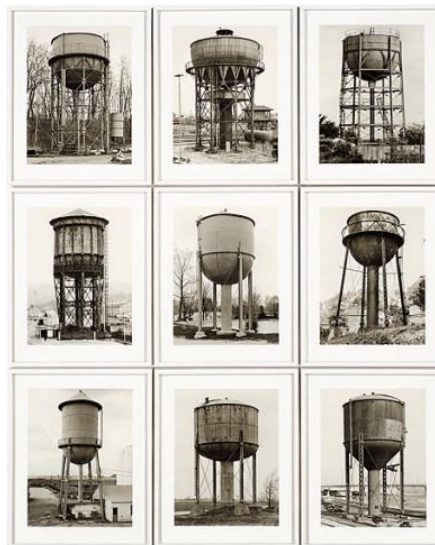
Fig. 38

The banal imagery depicting everyday life in Atget's photographs provided inspiration for Surrealist artists such as Man Ray, who viewed them as 'found

[108] I Schaffner, 'Eugène Atget', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p 45.
[109] Furthermore American theorist Benjamin Buchloh positions the work of Bernd and Hilda Becher as archives of melancholy, see B H D Buchloch, 'Warburg's paragon? The end of collage and photomontage in postwar Europe', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, pp. 56 – 57.

objects, an archive of the world of things ready-made to act as receptacles for the Surrealist gaze that transforms the ordinary into the uncanny, the document into art'.[110] These photographs represented a shift in the direction of artistic practice in the early twentieth century that explored the potential of the mundane and familiar as extraordinary through visual registers such as photography, readymades and collage challenging what was accepted as art.

Mapping spaces of interiority as the new frontier in the twentieth century

During the twentieth century, aspects of the *Wunderkammer* model were influential to artists and movements who challenged the increasingly ordered and controlled structure of society from social relations to civic planning, such as Dada, Surrealism, and Situationist International. American theorist Sven Spieker positions the emergence of bureaucratic archives during the nineteenth century as a response to the 'control revolution' (1880 – 1930), which was a reaction to the 'loss of economic and political control … [at] local levels of society during the Industrial Revolution'.[111] Here Baron Haussmann's renovations of Paris form a precursor to the political anxiety over how to manage and control the rapid growth of its constituents. These bureaucratic archives represent another form of institutional collection (such as Museums) that while systematic in their rational, hegemonic and organised nature, share similarities with the *Wunderkammer's* encyclopaedic nature due to the endless accumulation of information. The tension between the systematic model and *Wunderkammer* model of collecting that informs contemporary art had its beginnings with this 'control period' in which Atget and the Dadaists and Surrealists were producing artwork.

Dada (1915 – 1922) was an art movement that consisted of artists and writers primarily from France, Switzerland, and Germany. In an effort to create a tabula rasa against bourgeois complacency and the increasing violence of society, Romanian writer and founder of Zurich Dada, Tristan Tzara espoused tactics of chaos, flux,

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[110] I Schaffner, 'Eugène Atget', loc. cit.
[111] The 'control revolution' was coined by American sociologist James Beniger. J R Beninger, *The control revolution: technological and economic origins of the information society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1986, p. 37, cited in S Spieker, *The big archive: art from bureaucracy*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2008, p. 5.

disorder, fragmentation, juxtaposition, and spontaneity to shock and dismantle modern society, in which Dadaists had lost confidence.[112] As a movement, Dada utilised the literary, theatrical, and plastic arts as tools of subversion, notably through collage, montage, and photomontage to protest the socio-political climate of Europe during World War I. Examples include German artists George Grosz and John Heartfield's *Leben und treiben im Universal-City, 12 Unr 5 Mittags (Life and Work in Universal City, 12:05 Noon) (1919)* (Fig. 39) and Hannah Höch's *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada Durch die Letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkultureepochie Deutschlands (Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany) (1919 – 20)* (Fig. 40).
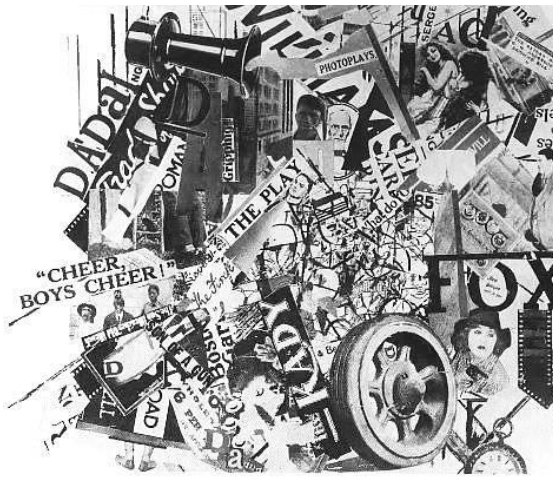
Fig. 39

Fig. 40

These artists utilised aspects of the *Wunderkammer* model such as chance and free association in the collection of their materials and heterogeneity and juxtaposition in the construction of their work. Dadaist collections share further similarities with the *Wunderkammer* as a survey of the present (opposed to an archaeological collection of the past). Yet where the Wunderkammer was designed to present an endlessly inclusive and cohesive cosmology, the Dadaists presented a fragmented and ruptured world, a world in ruin.

Like the Dadaists, German artist Kurt Schwitters, who had been associated with Dada, utilised this collage methodology. Schwitters did not fit into the Dadaist's

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[112] M Janco, 'Dada at two speeds', in L Lippard (ed.), *Dadas on art,* Prentice-Hall Inc, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971, pp. 36 - 38.

geo-political stance as his practice was more aligned with an expression of his own personal interior world. His conceptual methodology, *Merz* (1918 - 1948), which embodied poetry, drawings and collages, assemblage and sculpture, and architectural installation, shared some of the similarities of Dada, namely the embracing of discarded and scatological material (including language, but also found bodily refuse such as hair, used cigarettes, underwear, and urine), deconstruction of existing societal and cultural structures and morals, and their reconstruction as new critical entities. Where Dada embraced chaos, *Merz* utilised the fragmented remnants of chaos as a way to conscientiously construct art. However, Schwitters was considered an 'aesthete' by his Dada contemporaries, something that was of little importance to Dadaists, as aesthetic judgement carried with it the subconscious cultural imposition of order.

What is particularly significant about Schwitters is that he embodies 'the artist as collector' (even if his collections were more akin to hoarding as opposed to the collections of connoisseurs), whose artistic methodology was determined by acts of collecting and ordering found material from his 'scavenging expeditions'.[113] Like the *curieux* of the Early Modern period, travelling was integral to Schwitters' collecting methodology. Schwitter's *Merz* project is a material evidence of his daily wanderings within the landscape of pre-World War Two Germany and during his exile, as a document of his dislocation. Schwitter's, constant collection of *Abfall* (garbage, refuse), things discarded was an act of preservation of the past for the present.[114] Schwitter's *Merz* collages, such as *Opened by Customs (1937 – 38)* (Fig. 41), conflates distance and time into the singular space of the artwork by way of the scavenged souvenirs of travel, bus tickets, postal wrappings and newspapers. These objects and materials further documented the artist's psychological state by which, 'the autobiographical iconography of the materials thus acts as a factual reminder of Schwitters' "forms" of behaviour'.[115] Schwitters applied this collecting methodology in the form of a collage aesthetic to all aspects of *Merz* including his *Ursonate (1922*

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[113] R Cardinal, 'Collecting and collage-making: the case of Kurt Schwitters' in J Elsner & R Cardinal (eds), *The cultures of collecting*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1994, p. 76.

[114] E B Gamard, *Kurt Schwitter's Merzbau: the cathedral of erotic misery*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2000, p. 27.

[115] J Elderfield, 'The early works of Kurt Schwitters', *Artforum*, vol. 10, no. 3, November 1971, pp. 54 – 67, cited in ibid.

Fig. 41

- 23) (Fig. 42)*,* a sound poem that was a hybrid between music and language, in an effort to return to a primeval pre-linguistic communication, is a collection based upon his collage techniques in that the fundamental basis of language is removed from traditional syntax and recontextualised based upon the relationships between the elements rather than their meaning.

Fig. 42
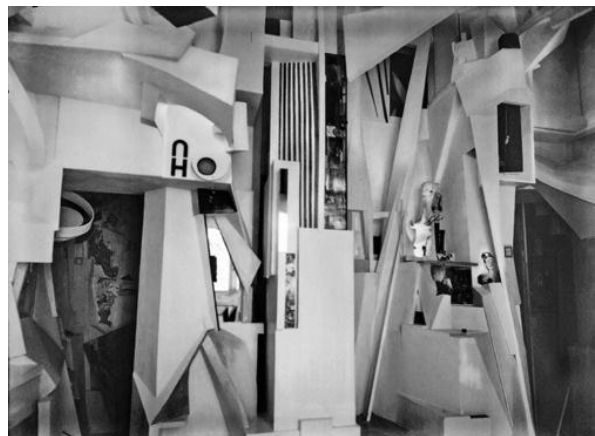
Fig. 43

Merzbau, as seen in the *Hannover Merzbau Cathedral of Erotic Misery, (c.1930)* (Fig. 43), was an ongoing project of Schwitters' that transformed his home into a multidimensional conflation of time and space that reflected the fragmented and estranged social environment of early Twentieth-Century Europe, by using the detritus of the city as a monument to the memory of individuals and ideals. It was the extension of his collage methodology as architectural installation, with similarities to

the encyclopaedic project of the *Wunderkammer*. [116] The tactics of juxtaposition and contrast that early modern cabinets of curiosity used to create wonder at the possibility of the world are used within *Merzbau* to express the energy exchange that Schwitters described as 'the basic "forms" of the universe as organic, developmental processes rather than fixed static and self-sufficient entities'. [117] Furthermore, like the cabinet of Cosimo de'Medici, whose systems of classification constantly changed based upon additions of new objects, *Merzbau's* architecture (as classification and structure made material) was constantly being redefined and rebuilt, with the addition of new objects. The objects Schwitters collected, often surreptitiously, had personal symbolic meanings, combining the magical fetish-object with the nostalgic souvenir. Schwitters saw *Merz* as a 'composite artwork, that embraces all branches of art in an artistic unit' to become an artist rather than a 'specialist in one branch of art'. [118] This idea of the *Merz* 'composite' artwork precedes what American cultural theorist Rosalind Krauss describes as a 'post medium condition'. [119] Developed from the practice of Belgian Marcel Broodthaers, this art-making strategy utilised hybridity in artistic mediums to express a conceptual impetus with artists identifying themselves as 'artists' rather than specialising as 'painters' or 'sculptors' and defines the practices of the contemporary artists discussed within the dissertation. Both Dada and Surrealism contributed to a period of artistic experimentation that sought to establish new art forms.

Surrealism, which began in the early 1920s in Paris, emerged from members of Dada, like French writer André Breton and artist Max Ernst. Where Dada engaged in a socio-political critique by responding to external events through media images, Surrealists responded to their own internal desires and the possibilities of an untapped mental landscape. While Surrealism was different to Dada, many of the artistic strategies, such as the exquisite corpse and automatic drawing, were the same

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[116] Both Roger Cardinal in R Cardinal, 'Collecting and collage-making: the case of Kurt Schwitters' in J Elsner & R Cardinal (eds), *The cultures of collecting*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1994, pp. 68-96, and Elizabeth Burns Gamard in E B Gamard, *Kurt Schwitter's Merzbau: the cathedral of erotic misery*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2000, describe Schwitter's Merzbau as a *Wunderkammer* both conceptually and physically.
[117] Gamard, op. cit., p. 143.
[118] K Schwitters, 'Merz (1920)', in L Lippard (ed.), *Dadas on art*, Prentice-Hall Inc, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971, pp. 104.
[119] See, R Krauss, *A voyage on the North Sea: art in the age of the post-medium condition*, Thames & Hudson, New York, 1999.

even if they were used for different artistic ends. The Dadaists used these automatic techniques to disrupt their own learned social/cultural conventions and the Surrealists used them in the development of the visual techniques that allow the unconscious to 'open a window onto the marvellous that lies concealed behind the everyday', which was done through two categories of techniques: ones that are automatic, using whatever is at hand to 'freeze' chance events; and ones that use methods of 'directly re-interpreting existing images to produce new' ones.[120] These visual techniques are ways of navigating the unconscious, through which the hidden realty of the world was documented. English curator and writer James Putnam explicitly draws the link between Surrealist art making techniques and the organisational logic of the cabinet of curiosities:

> The Surrealists wanted to disinter the unconscious workings of the mind and share with the early creators of the *Wunderkammer* a desire to construct a specific, personal order and anarchic juxtaposition of collected elements, thereby resisting the kind of separation imposed by the museum through specialized classification.[121]

While Putnam contextualises this return to the idiosyncratic model of collecting seen in the collages, assemblages, and poetry of the Surrealists as an early form of institutional critique, he also acknowledges the underlying motivation of the Surrealists to explore reality from a different perspective, one that shared an uneasy relationship with the everyday.[122] To this end, Surrealists repositioned everyday objects and scenarios in new relationships that called into question the naturalness of the everyday by exposing the underlying internal constructs of personal memories, dreams and the unconscious. In this way Surrealists appropriated the visual language of the everyday through found objects and images (*objets trouvés*), placing them in uncanny situations.

Unlike the chaotic juxtaposition of imagery in Dadaist photomontages, Ernst developed a unique form of collage that allowed for a quite seamless presentation of

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[120] A Brotchie, *Surrealist games*, Redstone Press, London, 1991.
[121] J Putnam, *Art and artifact: the museum as medium*, 2nd edn, Thames & Hudson, New York, 2009, p. 26.
[122] ibid.
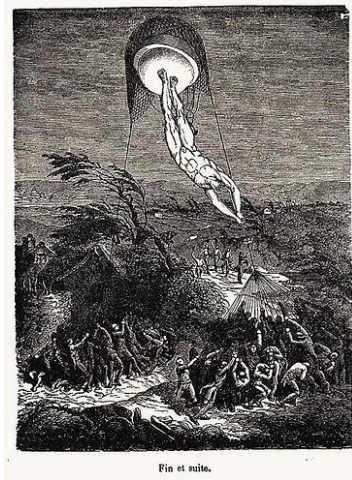
Fig. 44

Fig. 45

juxtaposed images to be viewed within an illusionistic space, creating a 'new and unexpected reality'.[123] His work *Fin et Suite* from *La Femme 100 têtes (Hundred Headless Woman) (1930),* (Fig. 44) is an example of this form of collage, where the collected engravings (by this time an obsolete form of documentation) present surreal situations that expresses a 'fortuitous encounter' and a 'miracle of total transfiguration', both in the construction of the artwork and the viewer's experience of the work.[124] This transfiguration changes the role of the object (or image) liberating it from 'its habitual context and function'.[125] Benjamin states that the collector's concern is the transfiguration of things where they are 'freed from the drudgery of being useful'.[126] With Surrealism this transfigured object performed a symbolic function, rather than a purely aesthetic one, and was situated between sculpture and the found object, yet was neither as, for example, in Salvidor Dalí's *Aphrodisiac Telephone (1936)*, (Fig. 45). As such these objects are imbued with metaphorical associations and fall within the realm of the fetish in both an anthropological and psychoanalytical way as objects that represent magical or spiritual essence and also desire.

In the early twentieth century, psychoanalysis was profoundly influential upon artists and their practices. It created a new way of describing and critiquing corporeal

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[123] L Lippard, 'Max Ernst', in L Lippard op. cit., p.123.
[124] M Ernst, 'Au-delà de la peinture' 1936, *Ecritures* (Paris, 1970), p. 253, cited in Finkelstein, H M, *Surrealism and the crisis of the object*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1979, p. 64.
[125] ibid.
[126] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, op. cit. p. 9.

phenomena by realising the psychological component of everyday occurrences. Freud's theories about the unconscious permeated the manifestos of art movements like Surrealism directly and Situtationist International indirectly. By acknowledging that the mental and physical worlds were inextricably linked, strategies were developed that sought to explore this relationship as a way of re-discovering the world after the advent of industrialisation. Through the collection of material culture and strategies of wandering, artists became engaged with a metaphorical relationship to the world, Surrealists through the symbolic nature of objects and the inner realms of the psyche, and Situationists through *dérive* and *psychogeography*. These strategies are indicative of an artistic need to approach and experience the world in innovative ways that serve to open up new relationships with social (those belonging to human constructs such as history and culture as well as human interactions) and physical (natural and manmade) environments and the objects held within.

French social theorist and founder of Situationist International, Guy Debord, used the term *psychogeography* to describe the emotional and behavioural impact of the landscape (and specifically the urban landscape of the city) in the conscious and unconscious mind.[127] The Situationists utilised the strategy of *dérive* (literally 'drifting') as a strategy of responding intuitively to the geography of a landscape as an extension of the Surrealists' project of 'trawling' (intuitively led wandering or meandering in search of the marvellous). For the Surrealists, Paris provided the 'ideal scene for surrendering to chance encounters with people, places, and objects'.[128] Debord states that, '*dérives* involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll' with the effective involvement in this strategy requiring the participants to 'let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there'.[129]

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[127] Ironically, attempts to apply *dèrive* to the countryside failed. This does not indicate the inability of *psychogeography* to exist in the natural world, Romanticism explored this condition within the sublime, however difficulties in traversing the vastness of the wilderness as well as a lack of human presence could have been contributing factors.

[128] Finklestein, op. cit., p.15.

[129] Debord, G, *Theory of the derive*, trans. K Knabb, Situationist International Online, 1956, retrieved 29 July 2011, < http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>.

This idea of using the urban landscape as a setting for artistic encounters of wandering has been important for artists such as French artist Sophie Calle, as can be seen in *Suite Vénitienne (1980)* (Fig. 46), in which Calle followed a man she met at a party in Paris to Venice, where she shadowed his movements over a two week period, photographing his movements throughout the city and diarising her encounters with him and Belgian artist Francis Alÿs, whose performances centre on

Fig. 46   Fig. 47

the act of walking as a poetic strategy of interacting with the urban social environment, for example, *The Collector (Colector) Mexico City (1991)* (Fig. 47) produced in collaboration with Felipe Sanabria, in which he dragged a small magnetised dog through Mexico City that collected debris from the city streets. Both artists use the urban environment as a site of collective experience and navigate this space through strategies of *dérive*, with Calle allowing another person to dictate her actions and Alÿs accumulating remnants of others' movements in his own wanderings.

Collecting, within Dada, Surrealism, or Situationist International, was not about the presentation of things (objects, images, experiences) to create an encyclopaedic theatre of the world like the cabinets of curiosities of the Early Modern period. They instead made the world a theatre in which they presented the relationships between things, rupturing and challenging systems of order and classification as a way of removing the conventions that inhibit new experiences. What these strategies share with the *Wunderkammer* is the creation of idiosyncratic and flexible spaces of

interrelation, where fact and fiction are conflated and navigation, whether physical or psychological, is made material. It is interesting to note the importance of the collective to all three movements. The central activities of these movements were designed to be undertaken in small groups; Dada's spontaneous performances were based upon the responses of a few key performers, the exquisite corpse required at least three people and Debord reflected that derive worked best when experienced in small groups. The collective art making strategies of these movements created a system in which participants became actors in a theatre of inter-relation, moving spaces of exploration from the physical and internal to relational domains.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the historical model of the *Wunderkammer* and its system of collecting as documentation or trace of physical exploration and subjective narrative of knowledge has congruencies with art making strategies in the twentieth century. The cabinet, based upon the objects (singularities) and experiences (narrative) it collects, is a site that maps physical landscapes through travel and documents the imagination and the relationships it has with both the collector and the objects collected. Due to its encyclopaedic impetus, the *Wunderkammer* is a model of collecting that is endlessly inclusive and paradoxical, a collection has no completion because it accepts endless possibility, and has no distinction between mythology and other subjective narratives with reality because it recognises that both opposites can exist simultaneously.

Furthermore, the cabinet of curiosity provides a system of classification and collection that is a malleable and shifting site of inter-relation, presenting objects and the relationships between them as a theatre of the world or *theatrum mundi*, which invited the viewer to participate in the narrative of the collection. One of the reasons it could do this is because, during the Early Modern period, the European world underwent an expansion based upon the discovery of the New World (the Americas). This had an effect on the collective psyche that changed as the world became more defined through its mapping and the progress of industrialisation, culminating at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, in both the United States and Europe. In the United States, this was the vanishing frontier of the

virgin landscape of the west coast (Wild West) and in Europe (and especially Paris) it was the erasure of material history through both modernisation and the destruction of World War One. Both events created a collapse of space in the psyche that seemed to limit new possibilities.

However, Dada, Surrealism, and Situationist International developed collecting strategies that allowed them to open up the field of possibilities within increasingly ordered and mapped spaces by returning to the intuitive aspects of the cabinet of curiosities such as free association, juxtaposition, heterogeneity, games of chance and wandering as conceptual and methodological approaches to existing environments. Furthermore, the Surrealists and Situationists used these strategies to explore the relationships between physical phenomena (people, places, things, and events) and psychic realms (memories, dreams, imagination, and the unconscious) as a subjective space of exploration and discovery that allowed artists to examine the structures of society rather than represent them.

The *Wunderkammer* provides a model by which artists collect objects, images, and experiences in order to destabilise traditional systems of classification and order. Furthermore, it provides an alternate history of knowledge that allows for a subjective (personal and fictitious) narrative to be presented as a legitimate event and, due to its inter-relational system that is free from empirical taxonomy, allows new possibilities to occur within how artists think about, construct and re-evaluate the world they live in, the objects they collect (through a form of intellectual intuition), and the subsequent artwork they make. By engaging with the framework of the collection as a theatre of the world, artists are able to present and explore scenarios that make a seemingly mundane world a site of wonder and, within this, render the normal uncanny, the rational absurd, and the real imaginary. It is through treating the object as both a physical and a symbolic entity that these relationships are investigated, creating a personal narrative of experience that serves to remove historical and institutional distance and in turn presents a contingent and endlessly shifting vantage point. The sites of collecting that facilitate this interrelation within artistic practices of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries will be investigated in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

The Architecture of Collecting: The artist's collection as a site of interrelation

> When we say architecture, we include the social, political and economic context. Architecture of any sort is in fact the inevitable background, support and frame of any work.[130]

> In short, for those able to see beyond the "form" of the work (how it is made) there is to be seen that combination of relations that is the work (what is made).[131]

This chapter will investigate traditional and alternative sites of artistic collections in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and consider how these sites contribute not only to a historical understanding of artistic production as well as how the structure of these sites function in the narrative (or meaning making) aspect of the work. The section 'On Architecture – structure and site' discusses how these sites correspond to spaces in which a collection is housed, which act as spaces of display, such as in museum exhibits, but also include spaces of storage (e.g. filing cabinets) and spaces that function as both spaces of display and storage (e.g. photo albums and permanent display cases). It further defines the term 'architecture' as both a physical and a historical/social/cultural structure that creates a context in which to view a collection. This context is integral in determining what is collected (the artwork's content, including the objects selected but also the conceptual criteria for their selection), how the work is constructed (physically and conceptually), and how the work is received and interpreted (based upon the viewer's own historical/social/cultural position). Moreover, this section will identify the relational nature of collected objects within the organisational logic of the collection and discuss how the structure and context of the collection provides a narrative framework that influences how the

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[130] D Buren, 'Function of architecture: notes on work in connection with the places where it is installed taken between 1967 and 1975, some of which are specially summarized here', in A A Bronson & P Gale (eds), *Museums by Artists*, trans. H Meakins, Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada, 1983, p. 73.

[131] J Kosuth, 'Notes on cathexis', in A A Bronson & P Gale (eds), *Museums by Artists*, trans. H Meakins, Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada, 1983, p. 221.

viewer constructs personalised meaning based upon the individual's own encounter with the object.

The next section 'The sites of the *Wunderkammer*, the museum and the artist's collection', investigates the structural impetus of the *Wunderkammer* as an example of an intuitive model and the museum collection as an example of a systematic model that both have different relationships to history and the viewer through their organisational logic. These structures will be used to demonstrate two different approaches to a collection's organisational logic that provide the basis for engaging with the works of artists who use a collecting methodology within their practice. To do this the rest of the chapter will explore how these two approaches manifest in artists' collections from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by investigating the different sites of these artworks. This chapter organises these sites into three traditional categories that are defined by different collections' historical and physical architectural support, defined within separate sections as the 'box', the 'tableau' and the 'archive'. Each section examines how the physicality of these sites represent a historical, social, and cultural context that is utilised and manipulated by the artist in order to present new and unusual situations and narratives by appropriating aspects of traditional forms of presentation. By doing so, artists utilise the collection as a way to visually investigate and interrogate collective and individual relationships with the world.

The section 'The box', which references a three-dimensional space in which a collection is contained, looks at museum interventions, installations and assemblages as artistic responses to the traditional sites of the museum/gallery, studio, and the display cabinet. These three-dimensional sites investigate the function of the collection as a microcosm representing aspects of the macrocosm or the world but also providing alternative dialogues against the monumentality of History and the public collective of society. The function of the collection as a microcosm and specifically a *theatrum mundi* is explored in the section 'The tableau'. The tableau exists as a flat or two-dimensional plane where the presentation (for example, collage and wall-based assemblages) or representation (for example, photography) of a collection is contained within a frame, serving to isolate the imagery and objects contained within. This section investigates the strategies of homogeneity and

heterogeneity that artists use within this space and how this has shifted what is understood as a collection. Following this is 'The archive,' which investigates a particularly expanded understanding of the collection. Spatially, the site of the artistic archive in this section can exist as both a frame, such as a document, a photograph, or a film still, and as a space that holds multiple frames within both time and space, such as a book, a filing cabinet, or a film, and can be organised sequentially or as an interrelated web. This section will examine how as a historical tool, the archive is used by artists to subvert 'Historical' narratives. Establishing how these different sites of artistic collections are structured provides an understanding of the narrative function of the collection and the systems of logic that construct these narratives. Moreover, this section will define two structural approaches that artists employ, corresponding to the *Wunderkammer* model and the systematic model, demonstrating that these models are crucial to artistic methodology.

On Architecture – structure and site

One of the requirements of a collection is that it is 'housed' somewhere, in other words that it is contained within a site, such as the mind for memories, albums for family photographs, display cases and storage crates for objects and ultimately, for artists, the museum for artworks. These sites correspond to architecture which serves to define the collection, both literally and figuratively, as this architecture defines the boundaries of what is collected but also provides a physical structure and a historical context in which to view the collection, a frame that focuses the viewer's attention onto selected objects. French conceptual artist Daniel Buren states that 'the history of Modern Art (in particular) is the history, recounted and repeated, of the internal architecture of the work, seen simultaneously as content and container'.[132] The investigation of architecture by artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as the material and historical background, support and frame of an artwork, as an integral aspect of not only how an artwork is constructed, which includes its material and conceptual elements but also its relationship to existing structures, such as social/cultural hierarchies, the visual presentation of material artefacts from museums to advertising, and the spaces artwork is displayed.

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[132] Buren, op. cit., p.69.

While Buren specifically discusses art in which the internal architecture of a work is self-reflexive, such that it is possible for an artwork to exist as a structure itself, the recognition that both internal and external architecture is intrinsically related to a work's content is significant to artists' collections. Architecture is dependent upon a physical structure of containment to determine the way in which it is to be approached and interacted with. This is also the case with a collection where structure determines scale, materiality, aesthetic, and function. However, a collection is not only bound by a physical structure based upon the 'housing' used to support its compiled items; it is also bound by other structures that determine the collection's attributes, ranging from the materially obvious taxonomy or typology (that defines and organises items based upon their homogeneity or heterogeneity) to the implicit forces of political ideals, cultural morals, and economic value – in other words, Marx's superstructure.

Fig. 48

Within art, these structures operate visually and, to a lesser extent, linguistically and textually, determining the physical and inherent systems that govern the interrelation of things, providing a 'logic' that determines how a viewer is to interact with the artwork. This creates a contextual meaning through the presentation of collected objects within a specific site, for example, Italian artist Claudio Costa's *L'Ineffabille Circolazione Dell'Umano (The Ineffable Circulation of Humanity) (1981)* (Fig. 48), an installation that displays rudimentary agricultural implements from European peasant farmers. Costa presents these objects in taxonomic groupings, appropriating the visual language that museums use to contextualise artefacts within a coherent system in order to preserve and study specimens. Here site is integral to the reading

of Costa's work. Within the context of the gallery it references an anthropological presentation of significant artefacts and presents these implements as precious objects worthy of being 'saved' due to their historical importance and their obsolescence. Yet when seen within their original site of the farmhouse, these implements are understood as objects to be used for production and would have been displayed differently according to function rather than an aesthetic taxonomy.

The sites of the *Wunderkammer*, the museum and the artist's collection

Within a physical site, collections are organised in two ways. The first system of organisation that determines what is collected and how it is presented is classification (e.g. taxonomy), a conceptual model by which objects fit together. Furthermore, the classification system (whether idiosyncratic or ideological) relies upon grouping objects based on similarities, such as physical attributes, materials, function, time period, culture, or manufacturer. The objects serve to exemplify the conceptual model as concrete evidence, which validates the authority of the model, for example, the diversity of physical characteristics in finch specimens from the Galapagos Islands that demonstrated English naturalist Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection. The second system of organisation that contributes to the way objects in a collection are presented within a specific location (and therefore how a viewer interacts with the collection) is spatial organisation. Where classification represents a conceptual approach or logic to interrelation, spatial organisation physically positions objects together from which relationships are drawn. Thus, the way in which a collection is spatially organised determines how the objects within the collection are seen to interrelate and the meaning that this creates for the viewer (who is also informed by a historical/social/cultural position in this interpretation). To this end, the *Wunderkammer* and the systematic model both have differing strategies of organisation that are utilised by artists within their practices.

As discussed in the last chapter, during the Early Modern period, the site of the collection was the cabinet of curiosities or *Wunderkammer*, which was characterised by a broad system of classification and a specific approach to spatial organisation. While the *Wunderkammer* was idiosyncratic and rather loosely organised in the categorisation of its objects, it still differentiated between *naturalia* and *artificialia*,

between the natural and the man-made. Rather than classifying objects according to similarities, cabinets of curiosities juxtaposed singularities based upon differences, for example, size, materials, or symbolic meaning, creating visual and conceptual contrast in order to heighten the viewer's experience of wonder as a theological example of the world's diversity. In its encyclopaedic mission, the taxonomy of the *Wunderkammer* was continuously expanding and redefining the relationships between objects with the inclusion of newly discovered rarities.
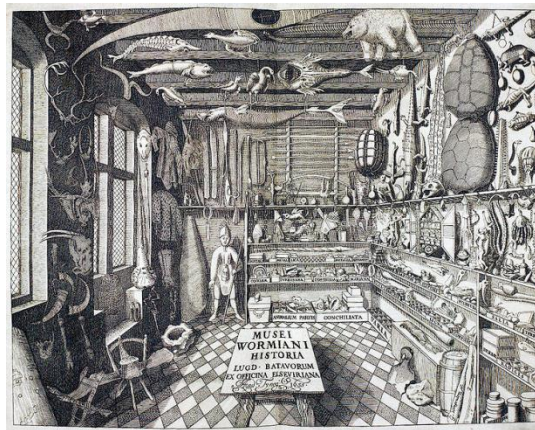
Fig. 49

The *Wunderkammer* was generally housed in a room or a series of rooms and characteristically used all surfaces of the space including the ceiling, seen for example in an engraving of Danish physician and antiquary Ole Worm's *Museum Wormianum (1655)* (Fig. 49).[133] The importance of this display method is that it simultaneously displayed and stored the artefacts of the cabinet, so that the collected objects were always presented as interrelational and diverse. Also, the use of every space within the architecture of the room solidified the metaphor of the cabinet as a microcosm or theatre of the world by encompassing the whole space, engulfing the viewer in the variety and profuseness of the items in the collection and therefore, symbolically, the world.

This cosmological model is opposed to the specialisation of the museum, which began during the eighteenth century based upon a system of taxonomy attributed to

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[133] The *Wunderkammer* also existed in specially designed pieces of furniture that often had secret compartments and complex systems of display. Here too every surface was used for decoration and display.

Swedish botanist and zoologist Carl Linnaeus and which evolved during the early nineteenth century as a precursor to contemporary museums.[134] The structure of the museum or systematic collection is characterised by taxonomy presenting objects within a neutrally organised logic that is reflective of empirical methodology and theoretical concepts. While these early museums were visually aligned with the cabinet of curiosities, for example, the archaeological and anthropological collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, UK, (established 1884) (Fig. 50), which groups artefacts according to typology and function rather than culture or time period demonstrating the evolution of human technology, this museum is indicative of the broader shift from a theological structure of organisation to the rational and observational scientific structure of the museum.

Fig. 50   Fig. 51

The specialisation of museums extends to representing the different 'branches' of knowledge such as the natural history museum, which studies the natural sciences, geology, zoology, botany, palaeontology, astronomy, and anthropology, and the art museum, which dedicates its study to visual art. Specifically the art museum selects artwork that displays both a significant technical and cultural contribution to history and classifies these according to stylistic evolution. While natural history museums have different collections to art museums[135], the classifications of these collections adhere to specific rules determined by the historical narrative of the institution, that

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[134] In reality the development of taxonomical classification was developed by many contributors proceeding and following Linnaeus. See S Pearce, *Museums, objects, and collections*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C., 1992, pp. 85 – 101.

[135] Except for certain indigenous collections, such as early Aboriginal bark paintings which inhabit the uneasy space of being both ethnographically and art historically significant, but also hard to classify based upon the colonialist interpretations of what defines art and what defines the indigenous 'Other'.

is, the laws that govern each specialised field determining a continuity of knowledge. Within the natural history museum these are things such as the classification system of biological life or the attributes of material culture (typology), whereas in the art museum these are art movements that correspond to history.[136] History in this regard relies upon the presentation of the past through artefacts as a structure in which to place the present as a teleological progression or evolution, for example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 51) that organises its galleries according to artistic movements such as Romanticism and Impressionism. Where objects collected for cabinets of curiosity were based upon exceptions, the rare and unique, museums collect objects that are examples, serving to represent institutional ideology through the artefacts' representational nature and thus validating and strengthening the historical and theoretical structure it embodies.

Fig. 52   Fig. 53

To do this, museums utilise specialised spatial organisation that reflects the ideological impetus of the institution, such as a contemporary art museum like the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia (Fig. 52), showcasing Twentieth and Twenty-first Century art in a current and contemporary context, favouring a minimal, neutral and temporary presentation, thus allowing each work to be viewed independently. This method of display differs to a museum that positions its collection within a permanent historical context such as the Louvre in Paris,

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[136] These art movements or 'ism's were developed by American art historian Alfred Barr in his seminal chart, which depicted the self-reflexive and formalist evolution of modern art, on the occasion of the 1936 exhibition 'Cubism and Abstract Art' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As the first director of MOMA, Barr was instrumental in the development of a museum designed specifically for modern art. MOMA became the template for other contemporary art museums. See, A H Barr, *What is modern painting,* 9th edn, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1966; S G Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the intellectual origins of the Museum of Modern Art*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2003; S Guilbaut, *How New York stole the idea of modern art: abstract expressionism, freedom, and the cold war*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1985.

France (Fig. 53), where the architecture of the building and the closely hung, salon display serves to position the work within a historical narrative. A contemporary art museum that focuses on temporary exhibitions relies upon the neutral space of the 'white cube.'[137] This white cube represents an aesthetic space that is predominantly used by contemporary galleries as a context designed to separate the objects it displays (for example, artworks) from the outside world and recontextualise these objects within an autonomous framework.

For the purposes of this dissertation, what the white cube exemplifies is the reduction of the architectural presence of the site (which corresponds to the historical, cultural and temporal position in which to view the artefacts/artworks presented) and therefore exposes the spatial logic of display and how this structure impacts the relationships between the artefacts. An example of this is German artist Candida Höfer's photograph *Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden 1 (1999)* (Fig. 54) which documents painted gallery plinths, transforming them from neutral devices of display to highlight their specific sculptural constitution. Höfer's act of painting the plinths emphasises how the forms used to display artefacts create their own structural intervention within the gallery space. This structure serves to present an environment of interrelation, where individual art objects become contextualised by surrounding
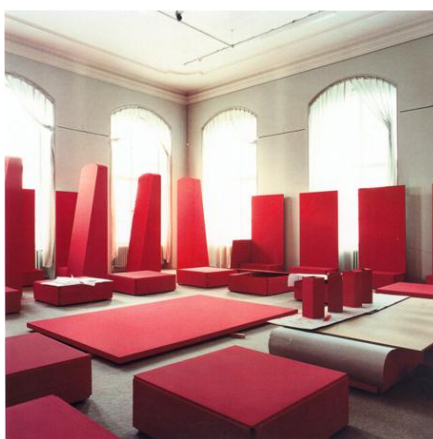
Fig. 54

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[137] The term 'white cube' was developed by Irish artist and theorist Brian O'Doherty to describe the neutral architectural space of the modern art gallery (white walls, lack of architectural detail, sealed windows and ceiling as lighting source) that shares functional similarities with religious buildings designed to create a setting where artefacts (artworks) appear in limbo between time and space. See, B O'Doherty, *Inside the white cube: the ideology of the gallery space*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA, 1999.

artworks. In turn, this creates a visual method of constructing a linking theme between works which assist in the construction of meaning.

To this end, artists appropriate the visual organisational logic of the museum with its rational taxonomy and structured display, yet they also employ the idiosyncrasy and non-hierarchical juxtaposition of the *Wunderkammer*. This is where an artist's collection and an institutional collection differ. American curator Ingrid Schaffner and German curator Matthias Winzen, in their exhibition and book, *Deep Storage: collecting storing and archiving in art* (1998), have investigated the practices of artists who are engaged with collecting and collections, exploring what they believe to be the paradoxical nature of artists' collections. To Schaffner and Winzen, all collections are repositories. However, if the repository of an institution's collection is about preservation and stasis, then an artist's collection is about potential, interrelation, and energy. Furthermore, Schaffner and Winzen have proposed several sites of artist collections. For Schaffner, these sites are the museum/storeroom (space of storage), the archive/library (space of documentation) and their nexus, the artist's studio, where 'art is not only made, but stored and documented'.[138]

For Winzen there are four realms or spatial metaphors that have been influential in determining the sites of artist collections: the archive/collection, the studio, the box, and the data space.[139] Artworks that dwell within the realm of the archive/collection use the structure of such to reference memory, history, and personal recollection through the artistic 'gesture' expressed in preservation, documentation, classification, and revelation.[140] The realm of the studio presents a space of transformation through its function as a storage space in two ways: it is where the ideas and materials that create a work of art are stored, but it is also where the leftover scraps and remnants from the creative process 'pile up'.[141] Therefore the metamorphosis of the object occurs through the 'collecting, sorting, evaluating and

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[138] I Schaffner, 'Digging back into 'Deep Storage'', in Schaffner, I & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 10.

[139] M Winzen, 'Collecting – so normal, so paradoxical' in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, trans. A Böger, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 24.

[140] ibid. p. 25.

[141] ibid.

packaging' within the studio.[142] For Winzen, the box represents a sculptural space of 'packaging, storing, dematerializing, or transmogrification into symbolic energy or charge,' in which experience and time exist as residual traces that imbue the work with its artistic energy. [143] Finally, the realm of the data space is concerned with images and information mediated through electromagnetic or digital storage, in which the 'oscillation between what is physically absent yet visually present – is renewed'. [144]

The identification of these four realms is also an attempt to classify the sites of collections as storage spaces reflective of the open-ended, paradoxical, and metamorphic nature of artist's collections. The problem with this approach of metaphorical realms is that the physical site that is intrinsic to contextualising and structuring the artistic collection, which in turn creates meaning by the viewer's interaction, is ignored. Such a position only partially investigates how meaning is constructed through a figurative structure of interrelation, when in reality both the metaphorical and concrete organisation of objects influence the translation of meaning within an artwork. While Winzen recognises the interrelation of elements within the collection and how this relates to the artist and the viewer, it is implied that his argument takes place within the museum, without ever questioning that site. Schaffner looks at three distinct sites that store different modes of communication and preservation that artists engage with: the museum that collects the art object, the library that collects documents, and the studio which is a conflation of both. This too is problematic, because it neglects to view spaces outside of the institution, but also, because it oversimplifies the types of things collected and how the site of collection determines the way the artwork is constructed.

The sites of collection discussed within this chapter all rely on containment as a definitive method of creating structure, as if these spaces are sealed and separate from the world. To view art only within this context would deny not only the specific conditions surrounding its production, but also the art historical discourses

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[142] ibid., p. 26.
[143] ibid., p. 27.
[144] ibid.

Fig. 55

Fig. 56

such as Earth Art (1968 – 1980s), of which American artists Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty (1970)* (Fig. 55) and Michael Heizer's *Rift (1968)* (Fig. 56) are examples. By exploring external sites these artists critique the institutional site of display. The importance of creating site-specific artwork as opposed to placing work within a neutral space (or as Smithson defined it, 'site' and 'non-site') was the recognition of the influence on a work of art through its social, political, and economic context and the physical architecture of its surroundings. The idea of site-specificity is one of being outside the white cube, outside architecture. Rather than being hermetically sealed, this contingent space is exposed to the forces that erode and destroy any attempt to preserve an artwork – the antithesis of the archival process.

While historically, the environment was used as an extension of the *Wunderkammer* and its collections in the form of grottos, botanical gardens, and sculpture gardens (which are still used today by museums), such spaces conformed to the same architectural principles that governed the structural logic of cabinets of curiosities. Therefore, Smithson and American theorist Douglas Crimp would classify these spaces as non-sites, institutional areas of containment, construction and neutrality, designed not to detract from the singularities collected, for example, the Kansas City Sculpture at the Park Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri (Fig. 57), a specifically designed neutral space in which the gallery's sculpture collection is displayed. This space is opposed to American artist Donald Judd's site-specific

museum The Chinati Foundation in Marfa Texas (Fig. 58), which was designed to permanently house artworks that responded to the location.
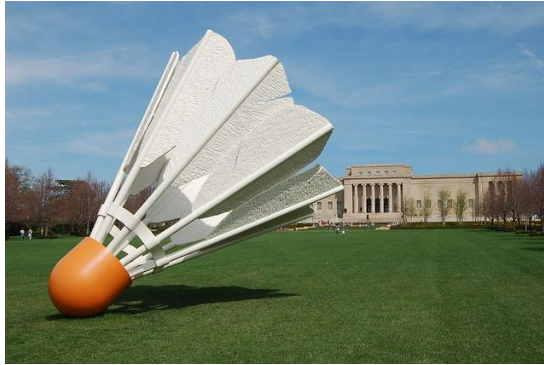
Fig. 57 Fig. 58

Crimp states that the 'museum [is] a no-place', which is both the 'actual museum' and the 'museum as a representation of the institutional system of circulation that also comprises the artists' studio, the commercial gallery, the collector's home, the sculpture garden'.[145] This idea of these sites that 'belong in no particular place' as a space without a specific context and locale, and which function like a palimpsest, contributes to this chapter's definition of not only traditional sites of collection but also strategies that provide alternate spaces. As suggested by Crimp, the studio and the sculpture garden share the same institutionalised space as the museum. Rather than separate the artist's studio from the museum as separate locations, therefore, this chapter will discuss these sites within the same space of containment as a structural logic. This containment refers to the collection's content and sites in which they are housed as opposed to American theorist Susan Stewart's metaphorical connotation of containment as representing a closed system of knowledge.[146] While this contained system in which patterns emerge that govern the presentation of knowledge and integrate new knowledge is indicative of systematic collections, Winzen argues that artists' collections are 'open-ended' due to their paradoxical nature.[147] Accordingly, the material and immaterial structures that govern an artist's collection need to be examined to establish how they are open-ended. This will be

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[145] D Crimp, *On the museum's ruins*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1993, p. 17.
[146] S Stewart, *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*, 9th edn, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2005, p. 161.
[147] Winzen, op. cit., p. 22.

discussed as two different structural approaches in the following sections. This concept of the relationship between how a collection is contained, its structure and what is collected, has determined three 'traditional' spaces (the box, the tableau, and the archive) based upon the demarcation of boundaries that separate the collection's site of interrelation from the gallery space and the outside world. These three spatial metaphors provide a formal guideline within which to examine the structural logic of the collection as a site of interrelation.[148]

The use of the term 'site' here refers to the microcosm that the collection constructs. It becomes a metaphoric space that, while it reflects the outside world, also acts independently of it. Smithson would define this metaphoric construct as a 'non-site' (owing to its removal from the outside world and placement within the gallery).[149] However, within this dissertation it is important to reposition Smithson's historical 'non-site' (which could be seen as a contradiction to the collection as a site of interrelation) within American artist Mark Dion's expanded understanding of 'site':

> Site-specificity today is not that of Bochner, LeWitt, Serra or Buren, defined by the formal constraints of a location. Nor is it that of Asher and Haacke, defined as a social space enmeshed in art-culture. It can be these things plus historical issues, contemporary political debates, the popular culture climate, developments in technology, the artist's experience of being mistreated by the hosting institution, even the seasonal migration of birds. There are different ways to define a site. And with it comes a new understanding and appreciation of the audience'.[150]

In Dion's definition, 'sites' become spaces of interrelation that systems such as Baurillard's 'system of objects' that inhabits the space of the collection, interact through the material and immaterial structures of such sites.

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[148] The spatial metaphors of the box, tableau and the archive are by no means definitive or rigid. While there are historical works that adhere to these physical sites of containment, there are many contemporary artists' works discussed below that embody several spaces for example, German artist Karsten Bott's *One of Each (Von Jedem Eins) (1993 - ongoing)*.

[149] R Smithson, 'A provisional theory of non-sites (1968)', in J Flam (ed.), *Robert Smithson: the collected writings*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA, 1996, p. 364.

[150] M Kwon, 'Interview: Miwon Kwon in conversation with Mark Dion', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & M Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p. 26.

The Box

Using Winzen's metaphorical realm as a basis, the site of the 'box' represents a three-dimensional space of presentation, where objects are presented within the context of the site. These 'objects' can be material representations like photographs or newspaper clippings, as demonstrated in the work of English artist Peter Blake in *A Museum for Myself (1982)* (Fig. 59), where ephemera act as objects. However, within the structure of the 'box' they function as tangible objects as opposed to only functioning as representational iconography. This is significant as in this role objects exhibit both symbolic/metaphorical and formal relationships within a collection, which will be expanded upon further in the following chapter.

Fig. 59

As a site of interrelation the box represents a myriad of practices ranging from the installation, which uses the gallery's architectural space, to contain and contextualise the relationships between objects in the artists' collection within a public space in much the same way that museums and *Wunderkammer* do, to the display case, which as both sculptural content and container, presents a portable and intimate microcosm of the artist's idiosyncratic position. Regardless of the scale, the organisational and structural logic of the box operates in the same way. To demonstrate how this three-dimensional space functions, this section will examine the different strategies artists use in the construction of their installations, by examining the work of Belgian artist

Marcel Broodthaers, American artist Barbara Bloom, and Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn.

As an artistic collecting strategy, the installation is significant given its historical foundations in both the *Wunderkammer* and the museum. Furthermore, the installation has become an important methodological outcome for artists. In 'An archival impulse' (2004), Hal Foster addresses the interdisciplinary practices of artists working in an archival manner. Rather than approaching each of the registers of object, image, and text as separate concerns, he sees that through the installation these registers interact. Foster defines the specific condition of the installation as one utilising a lack of spatial hierarchy. It is through this non-hierarchical structure that Foster elaborates upon the concepts of 'alternative knowledge' and 'counter-memory' illuminating the 'nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private'.[151] To understand how this can occur, it is important to first examine how artists engage with the structural organisation of the museum

The physical structure of the museum contains both the areas of display that are designed for the presentation of artefacts for the general public and the private area of the storeroom, which holds the items within the collection that are outside the specific narrative of the display, but still deemed worthy of preservation. While the public galleries of the museum are designed to present a narrative of 'History' with a capital 'H', the storeroom has a different function (one of optimal storage) that could be considered a narrative *in media res*, in which the historical narrative is not visually continuous. Further, the 'History' that the museum espouses is recognised by Crimp and French theorist Michel Foucault as a 'fiction'[152], not because the represented aspects within the museum are not true; rather, it is because meaning is made through the selection and presentation of certain things and therefore through the exclusion of others. Thus, History is subjective. Through the selection of objects that serve to represent the narrative, it is reflective of and dependent on the power structures that edit it.

[151] H Foster, 'An archival impulse', *October*, vol. 110, Autumn 2004, p. 5.
[152] M Foucault, 'The History of Sexuality', in C Gordon (ed.), *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972 – 1977*, trans. C Gordon, L Marshall, J Mepham & K Soper, The Harvester Press, Brighton, Great Britain, 1980, pp. 183 –193.

Fig. 60   Fig. 61

The mechanisms of display and storage acquisition within the museum have become arenas in which artists interact with these fictions and their structures as a narrative exercise that subverts the 'History' of the museum and its contributing institutions such as the auction house.[153] An example is Claudio Costa's *Museum of Man (Museo dell'Uomo) (1974)* (Fig. 60), which presents replica specimens of human evolution, all of which, ironically, were modified from casts of his own body. This work along with American artist Allan McCollum's installation *Lost Objects (1991)* (Fig. 61), where plaster casts of dinosaur bones (designed to complete existing skeletons) were juxtaposed with marble sculptures, calls into question the artistic license that museums take in constructing replicas to represent the 'absent or lost specimen'[154] in order to 'fill out blank areas in the 'patterns of the past".[155] Costa's appropriation of museum structures of display and McCollum's use of juxtaposition between organised space and repetition are integral to understanding how artists subvert historical narratives by using the structures that construct them. Two artists who do this are Marcel Broodthaers and Barbara Bloom, both of whom curate existing objects selected from their personal collections in their projects, blurring the boundaries between institutional and private collections by appropriating the language of institutional structures of presentation in order to reposition idiosyncratic collections.

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[153] For extensive examples of artists' practices that work within the museum see, J Putnam, *Art and artifact: the museum as medium*, 2nd edn, Thames & Hudson, New York, 2009.
[154] ibid., p. 55.
[155] Pearce, op. cit., p. 87.

Fig. 62   Fig. 63
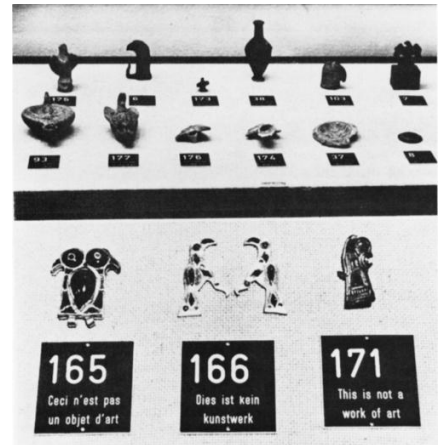
Marcel Broodthaers's, *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, (1968 – 1972)* (Fig. 62), was a project that critiqued the political, economic, and cultural narrative of the museum by subverting its architectural, organisational, and ideological structure, creating 'museum fictions'.[156] Taking on the role of museum director, Broodthaers displayed various sections of this fictitious museum in different locations, with each section challenging not only how museums function but also what is considered art. The *Musée d'Art Moderne* appropriates the exhibition structures that institutions use, and instead creates a 'hierarchy of vacant, interlinked formal frameworks', playfully questioning the construct of the museum and the position of art within that construct.[157] American theorist Rosalind Krauss describes Broodthaers's project of *détournement*, as signalling the end of medium-specificity within art (or as she describes it, the 'post medium condition') but also exposes capitalism as the 'ultimate master of *détournement*', which is able to 'appropriate and reprogram anything to serve its own ends'.[158] Throughout the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, Broodthaers repeatedly states and then negates the authority of the museum by juxtaposing contradictory statements and situations, for example, the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures (1972)* (Fig. 63), labelling his artefacts 'This is not a work of art', yet positioning them in what he calls a 'Museum of Art'. By subverting the linguistic and visual characteristics of the museum, Broodthaers creates a variety of poetic spaces in which new relationships

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[156] Crimp, op. cit. p. 201.
[157] H Gaβner, 'Marcel Broodthaers', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 86.
[158] R Krauss, *A voyage on the North Sea: art in the age of the post-medium condition*, Thames & Hudson, New York, 1999, p. 33.

between objects, superstructures, and viewers become available and can be played out.

American artist Barbara Bloom, whose practice investigates psychological and narcissistic issues of collecting – how things relate to the dialectic between presence and absence, and how objects 'carry ideas' creating a 'mental and visual hopscotch that occurs when ideas stand in for people and things stand in for ideas' – also subverts the language of the institution in her exhibition and artists' book *The Collections of Barbara Bloom (2008)* (Fig. 64).[159] Broken into eleven departments such as Doubles, Innuendos, and Broken (based upon her own intuitive system of classification) and presented in the manner of an estate sale and a retrospective collection complete with a catalogue *raissoné*, this exhibition included her personal collections of things such as postcards and images of twins and doubles. Bloom also reconfigured previous installations and artworks, as can be seen in *Three Chairs from the Reign of Narcissism (1989)* (Fig. 65), depicting prints of her dental x-rays and astrological chart. This method of artistic recycling and structural reorganisation

Fig. 64   Fig. 65

affects the associations and meanings that the work as a whole constructs. Bloom states, 'I am never interested in singular objects in my work. It's usually something in relationship with something else in relationship with something else and the way those meanings start to ricochet off one another'.[160] Furthermore, the architecture of

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[159] *'The Collections of Barbara Bloom'* was first exhibited in 1998 at the Wexner Centre for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio. S Tallman, *Artist project: Barbara Bloom*, Frieze Magazine, 2011, retrieved 5 February 2012, <http://www.frieze.com/issue/print_article/artist-project-barbara-bloom/>.

[160] K Wilton, *Curators voice: Barbara Bloom on Barbara Bloom*, Artinfo, 2008, retrieved 5 February 2012, < http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/27219/curators-voice-barbara-bloom-on-barbara-bloom/>.

the installation (provided by the museum) contextualises the collection as a site of interrelation, where objects in both their material and immaterial condition have shifting relationships, which in turn constructs open-ended narratives. Within Bloom's work these narratives are her own personal fictions.

Fig. 66   Fig. 67

In contrast to Broodthaers' and Bloom's work, which echo a self-reflexive and institutional position, the work of Thomas Hirschhorn constructs an environment that expresses the complexity of 'being' in the world, through a sensory and mental overload. Hirschhorn's installation, *It's Burning Everywhere (2009 - 11),* exhibited in 2009 at the Dundee Contemporary Arts in Scotland (Fig. 66) and in 2011 at the Kunsthalle Mannheim in Germany (Fig. 67), reflects a structural methodology that German curator Stefanie Müller describes as 'collages in space'.[161] This process is significant as Hirschhorn utilises space as site upon which to collapse heterogeneous materials as a way of confronting 'the chaos, the uncomprehensibility [sic], and the unclarity [sic] of the world'.[162] Hirschhorn's installations 'function like 'models of the world' that trigger an avalanche of simultaneous questions and statements on situations, events and conditions'.[163] In this regard, Hischhorn's work shares similarities with the non-hierarchical, heterogeneous and juxtaposed space of the *Wunderkammer*. Yet Hirschhorn's installations remain more entropic, chaotic, and formless. Rather than depict unique and rare objects, these works combine found fragments of material culture, such as advertisements, fashion and tabloid

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[161] S Müller, 'Determined, boundless, independent: some remarks on Thomas Hirschhorn's collages in space', in U Lorenz (ed.), *Thomas Hirschhorn: it's burning everywhere*, Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg & Berlin, 2011, pp. 106 – 110.

[162] T Hirschhorn, 'About my works on paper', in New Museum of Contemporary Art, *Collage: the unmonumental picture,* Merrell, New York, 2007, p 44.

[163] Müller, op. cit., p. 110.

photographs and images of current events, with cheap mass-produced items such as, tape, cardboard, foil, and markers, into a constructed collection. They transform the space of the gallery into a phantasmagorical landscape, a 'grotesquerie of our immersive commodity-media-entertainment environment'.[164] Hirschhorn's works do not reflect the reification of God's creation (like the cabinet of curiosities); rather, they depict the abject violence and complicity of the world of humans.

To this end, *It's Burning Everywhere (2009)* is structurally organised so that the viewer must participate in this metaphorical environment. Dwarfed by the materials and scale of the work, viewers navigate the space like a maze by following the serpentine path. There is no single vantage point, no critical distance, from which to study the work. Unlike Bloom's heterogeneous display in which her personal objects interrelate as a spectacle for the viewer, Hirschhorn places the viewer directly within his model of the world. Within Hirschhorn's space of interrelation, the viewer becomes a character within the collective narrative, with the installation's collection of found and constructed objects standing in for the social relationships of the outside world. As a site of interrelation, the box thus exemplifies a model of the world contained within a three-dimensional space that serves to provide a context for the interplay of objects, which relate to each other physically and metaphorically. The box represents an imagined and physical site of play that uses both the organisational logic of taxonomy/typology and a range of intuitive and idiosyncratic classifications in order to convey alternative and personal narratives. To do this, artists who utilise the box as a site for their collections rely upon appropriating and reflecting the structural organisation of the site's architecture, which mirrors the superstructural language of display, thus providing a familiar environment in which to investigate alternative narratives.

The Tableau

If the box is a theatre of interrelation that utilises a three-dimensional use of space, then the tableau as a structural metaphor of artistic collections existing as a planar surface contained within a 'frame' reduces this theatre to a two-dimensional

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[164] Foster, 'An archival impulse', op. cit., pp. 10 – 11.

perspective. While a tableau (such as a photograph or a painting – both traditionally two-dimensional media) is as an object in its own right, it is displayed within the architectural site of the gallery, the studio, or the home, and therefore has a relationship to the space of display. However, most tableaux are constructed against site-specificity and are designed for the ubiquitous neutral space of the 'white cube'. Yet in its pictorial function the tableau is also related to the three-dimensional space of the installation. American theorist Briony Fer argues that the tableau is the pictorial idiom constructed by the installation and presented through the photographic model of the tableau.[165] In this way, the photographic tableau acts as a scene, transforming the *theatrum mundi* of the installation into the pictorial logic of the stage by way of the framing that the photograph constructs. This is evident in the practices of Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto and American artist Louise Lawler.

Fig. 68

The *Devonian Period (1992)* (Fig. 68) is representative of a series of photographs by Sugimoto that depict the life-like scenes of natural history museum dioramas. Sugimoto approaches these constructed environments as if they were *tableaux vivants* (living pictures), a theatrical strategy in which live actors or models pose as if they were images in a picture, keeping still and quiet for the duration of the display. Using the reduction of depth the photograph creates to reframe the diorama,

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[165] B Fer, *The infinite line: remaking art after modernism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2004, p. 87.

Sugimoto was able to make the artificial environment appear lifelike.[166] This was achieved due to the work's illusionary pictorial logic that simultaneously seems to freeze a moment in time and provide an accepted image of representation with a singular perspective. In this context the taxidermy and replica specimens appeared to relate to each other as live actors in a scene, documented by photography.

Fig. 69

Whereas Sugimoto investigates the illusionary and artificial nature of museum displays, Lawler investigates the storage, display, and marketing of artworks within an art-cultural system. In *Objects (1984)* (Fig. 69), Lawler uses the museum as the subject of her work. Rather than documenting artefacts within the gallery space, however, Lawler photographs their interaction in the storage areas of the museum. Lawler's work constantly refers to art's own 'external conditions, the production, display and stewardship of culture'.[167] As a steward of culture, the museum promotes a narrative of continuity through spatial organisation and classification, and a site of preservation (e.g. climate control) in the public galleries. Yet Lawler's photographs present the discrepancy between the conservation of a museum space and the manner in which artworks are stored (and their lack of structure). Lawler demonstrates that

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[166] 'Eventually I visited the Natural History Museum, where I made a curious discovery: the stuffed animals positioned before painted backdrops looked utterly fake, yet by taking a quick peek with one eye closed, all perspective vanished, and suddenly they looked very real. I'd found a way to see the world as a camera does. However fake the subject once photographed, it's as good as real'. H Sugimoto, *Dioramas*, Hiroshi Sugimoto, 2012, retrieved 5 February 2012, <http://www.sugimotohiroshi.com/diorama.html>.

[167] I Schaffner, 'Louise Lawler', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 188.

within private spaces, art's hierarchy is compromised, but it is also freed from the rigidity of historical narratives. As a result, the artefacts Lawler photographs become subjects, coming to life 'once they are away from both the public and curatorial gaze'[168] and in doing so construct their own situational narratives.

As an illusionary structure of interrelation, photomontage shares aspects with photography. These dimensions are seen within the practices of English artist Richard Hamilton and American artist Martha Rosler. Both artists utilise the pictorial logic of the tableau to construct surreal representations of contemporary life by juxtaposing images of material culture taken from advertising, glossy magazines, and newspapers as a form of critique. In *Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing? (1956)* (Fig. 70), Hamilton uses illusionistic space to construct a pictorial narrative. By utilising collected images that reflect analogous perspectives, Hamilton creates a hyperreal and ironic *mise en scène* through the way collected imagery, grouped together in such fashion, generates an illusionistic sense of perspective.

Fig. 70   Fig. 71

This narrative aspect is also seen in Martha Rosler's series, *Photo – op, Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful (2004)* (Fig. 71), but where Hamilton is depicting a consumerist utopia, Rosler examines the disparity between consumerist society represented by affluence and glamour and the degradation of war driven by a need to

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[168] Putnam, op. cit., p. 119.

possess, positioning both as aggressive drives, creating an environment that embodies a 'fantasia' within the space of the frame.[169] Rosler's use of juxtaposition, repetition and contextualisation, move the work beyond pure photo-documentation to express the violence, horror, and complacency depicting an emotive (and perhaps more accurate) account of contemporary society. By constructing a contradictory space in which different genres of mass-produced imagery are contrasted through montage, Rosler invites the viewer to participate in the uncomfortable spectacle of her imagery in which the frame is the 'beginning, not an ending'.[170] In this way the representational reality the image constructs also challenges the reality of the viewer, whose position is altered by the experience of the work. Rosler's photomontage demonstrates that the tableau is a constructed pictorial modality that conflates reality with the surreal and therefore constructs new narratives.

There is another function of the tableau as employed by artists, that discards illusionistic space and instead uses the planar surface of tableau as a platform upon which to place imagery and objects using an altogether different organisational logic. Structurally, there are two organisational strategies that these sites employ in determining how they are approached and how they are 'read': the grid and the flatbed.[171] The term 'flatbed' is derived from what American art critic and historian Leo Steinberg called the 'flatbed picture plane', the horizontal nature of which he aligned with culture. As a strategy the grid can be seen as modernist in tradition, a space of seriality, order and unity, whereas the flatbed can be seen as postmodern, a space of fragmentation, chaos, and interrelation. This chapter thus views the grid and the flatbed as two different strategies of depicting pictorial information through the relationships between elements: one uses homogeneity; the other uses heterogeneity. Both strategies are the result of the destabilisation and decentralisation of the illustrative and representational nature of the picture plane within painting that occurred with the advent of photography.

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[169] M Rosler, 'Martha Rosler', in *Collage: the unmonumental picture,* Merrell, New York, 2007, p 96.
[170] ibid.
[171] R Krauss, 'Horizontality', in Y A Bois & R E Krauss, *Formless: a user's guide*, 2nd edn, Zone Books, New York, 1997, p. 94.

Like the structural organisation of the museum display, the grid uses the homogeneity of its seriality to compare and contrast elements placed within it. As such, the placement of items, both found and constructed, within this seriality becomes an act of collecting for the artist. At its most didactic it presents information without subjectivity, however, within art even works based purely on the grid such as German artist Gerhard Richter's *Colour Chart* paintings, for example, *192 Colours (1966)* (Fig. 72) and the artwork of American artist Agnes Martin, contain the intricacies of their own personalised geometries through the intervals such a structure creates. Agnes Martin's *oeuvre* specifically focused on the structure of the grid and its inherent relationships, for example *Wood (1964)* (Fig. 73). Interested in the intervals between things, Martin created hand-drawn grids that reflected the harmonious ratios within music combined with the infinitesimal differences the human hand produces. To grid a tableau is therefore to map that physical space through transcription, yet Martin's grids also mapped an 'immaterial and meditative space', that were not so much a representation of the infinite sublime as 'calculations of the spaciousness of spirit'.[172]

Fig. 72
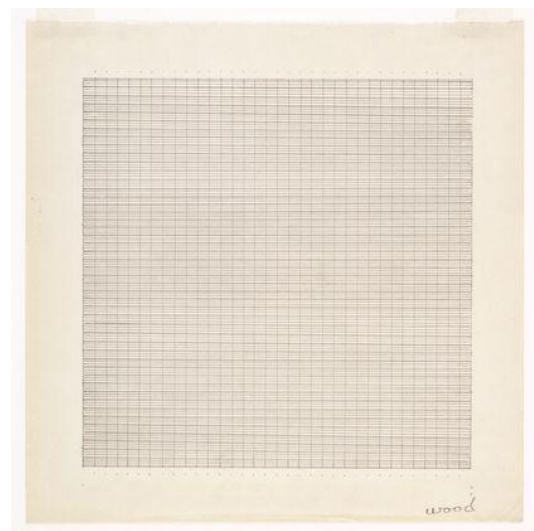
Fig. 73

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[172] Fer, op. cit., pp. 47 – 53.

The structure of a work, made material, opens up the possibility to critique and explore that structure, like Broodthaers's museum, creating new ways of seeing and representing the world. This can be seen in Ellen Gallagher's practice, which uses the readymade grid (found in writing and graph paper) as a substrate in which to contrast not only heterogeneity of the handmade mark through repetitive elements but also accumulation that overwhelms the order that the grid provides, such as *Soma (1998)* (Fig. 74). This collapses the illusionistic space of the picture, in which each layer relates to the one visible from underneath it, much like American artist Mark Bradford's decollages, for example, *Black Venus (2005)* (Fig. 75). However, where Gallagher uses the grid as a base structure for her imagery, Bradford's grids are revealed through the removal of layers, as a process of excavation.
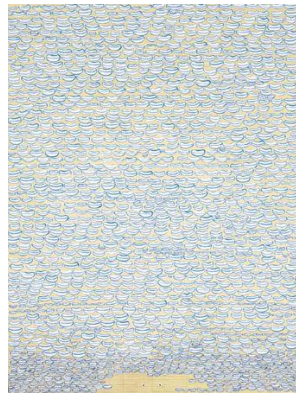
Fig. 74   Fig. 75

Within the tableau, the systematic organisation of the grid is structurally opposed to the dynamic heterogeneity of the 'flatbed'. Crimp states when describing the flatbed within the artwork of American artist Robert Rauschenberg that the 'structural coherence that made an image-bearing surface legible as a picture at the threshold of modernism differs radically from the pictorial logic that it obtains at the beginning of postmodernism'.[173] Central to this concept is the way in which a picture's 'readability' is contingent upon its 'pictorial logic'. Furthermore, the pictorial logic of the flatbed is intrinsically related to the horizontality of its production. This is evident in the practices of Rauschenberg, Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri, and American artist Jackson Pollock, whose work embodied the indexical nature of its production through a shift in axis. With this horizontal condition, the artist's material trace

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[173] Crimp, op. cit., p. 50.

became collected within the space of the tableau, and in the case of Pollock's 'drip paintings', such as *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30) (1950)* (Fig. 76), the 'artefacts' of trash embedded in the surface became the material evidence of the artist's 'culture', eternally preserved and immortalised, the irony of which is dialectically opposed to History (yet compliments the archaeological nature of creating that narrative).[174]

Fig. 76

Fig. 77

While similar to Pollock's 'drip paintings' in their horizontality, Daniel Spoerri's 'tableaux-pièges' or 'trap pictures', for example, *Hahn's (Last) Supper (1964)* (Fig. 77), are aligned with Steinberg's equation of the flatbed with culture, through a *Nouveaux Réalisme* engagement with the object. They are literally the table (tableau) and its marks of material culture, ingestion, social interaction, and duration made vertical. Spoerri's work is literally the evidence of an event and, through the constellation of elements in disarray it transcends the collection to become a site of voracious consumption. The chaos of action is made more apparent through the lack of order and hierarchical structure. Both Rauschenberg's silkscreen paintings and his combines utilise the heterogeneity and lack of hierarchy of the flatbed, as in *Persimmon (1964)* (Fig. 78), which exemplifies Steinberg's horizontality as the site of culture, combining its historical references of Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens' *Venus at a Mirror (1615)* (Fig. 79), (seen in Rauschenberg's work a photographic silkscreen representation) with images of modern life through a collage aesthetic. This invokes the archaeology of knowledge, replacing 'such unities of historicist thought as tradition, influence, development, evolution, source and origin with concepts such as discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit and transformation'.[175]

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[174] Krauss, 'Horizontality', op. cit., p. 95.
[175] Crimp, op. cit., p. 47.
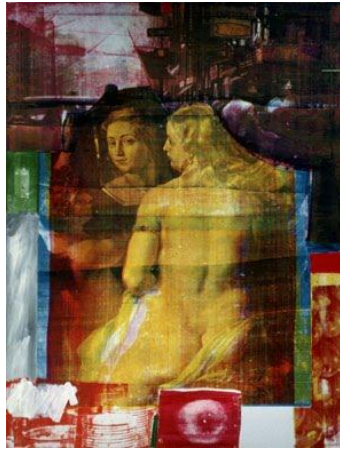
Fig. 78

Fig. 79

Even his freestanding combines, for example, *Minutiae (1954)* (Fig. 80), are more aligned with tableaux than the architecture of the box, in that the organisational structure and the hierarchy associated with a sealed display case are removed through the object's inclusion and attachment to the picture plane and the structural openness of the artwork. As such, Rauschenberg's silkscreen paintings and

Fig. 80

Fig. 81

combines conflate the linearity and continuity of material culture (to which artistic masterpieces and tabloid magazines both contribute), presenting new relationships between imagery and objects that express intuitive associations, leaving the work open to interpretation. However, due to the heterogeneity and lack of organisational hierarchy of the work this interpretation evolves, as the viewer must 'sift' through the imagery, piecing together their own pathways of 'reading' the work.

Thomas Hirschhorn uses a similar strategy in his mixed media collages, for example, *La Série des Antalgiques (Upfen) (2005)* (Fig. 81). Like Spoerri and Rauschenberg, Hirschhorn accumulates and repositions everyday objects and imagery, however Hirschhorn specifically chooses imagery from printed matter that are polarising due to their violence and hyper-sexuality. In this work, Hirschhorn uses the cultural flatbed to construct a political, psychological, and emotional response to culture that presents it as a chaotic barrage, expressing the 'complexity and contradiction of the world into a single collage'.[176] While Hirschhorn's imagery and conceptual critique shares similarities with Rosler's *Photo – op, Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful (2004)*, Hirschhorn's chaotic barrages are different to the illusionistic space of Rosler's collages, which portray a seamlessly constructed pictorial reality as a proposition for the reality of the viewer. In this way, Hirschhorn's work is more aligned structurally with Dadaist collages and Rauschenberg's combines, through his use of juxtaposition, heterogeneity, and fragmentation. As a site of interrelation, the tableau is deeply indebted to the history of painting and the pictorial strategies of organisation that developed as illusionistic perspective, and found its contemporary equivalent in the photograph. This pictorial logic constructs 'scenes' which reflect a reality seen from a particular point of view. As a result this approach has allowed artists who engage with a collecting practice to depict objects and images that interact within the 'frame' of the work presenting narratives as a form of theatre. The tableau as a planar surface also functions as a site of interrelation, one of both chaos and order, constructing less cinematic narratives that are more ambiguous and interpretive. Indeed, it presents an abstract site where temporal and spatial objects and events are conflated disrupting linearity and creating new visual relationships between disparate things.

The Archive

Out of all the terms used to describe the phenomenon of artistic collecting practice, none is more used than 'archive' within contemporary art. It is used synonymously with the word 'collection' to describe groups of objects, images, and information that have been accumulated, sorted and stored, specifically those aligned with institutions

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[176] Hirschhorn, loc. cit.

or bureaucracies as a historical tool in which 'documentation', such as photography, film, documents, and information, are stored. However, as a site of collection, American cultural theorist, Akira Mizuta Lippit states, 'one might designate the archive as the metonymic signifier for the spaces and economy of spaces that are determined by the quartet of object, archive, world and universe'.[177] This suggests that the archive is part of a greater collecting system (like the *theatrum mundi* of the *Wunderkammer*) and therefore has a structural and organisational logic that defines it. Foucault further defines this system:

> the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific singularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us already growing pale.[178]

Like the storeroom of a museum or the encyclopaedic project of the *Wunderkammer*, the archive's function is to document and preserve *all* information (both included and omitted) from the narrative of History. Yet rather than endlessly accumulate such information, the archive is organised within a system of interrelation that is flexible, being both sequential and rhizomatic such as filing things by alphabet, typology, or iconography. For an artist, the archive is both a psychological and physical space that functions as a research tool, a site of excavation. Artists engage with the archive to expose inherent absurdities, incongruities, unexpected congruities and gaps by using the archive's structural logic in which the collected item's rigid classification within the system of the archive can be poetically translated.

[177] A M Lippit, 'The world archive and universal research', in M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008, p. 183.

[178] M Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*, trans. A M Sheridan Smith, Vintage Books, New York, 1972, p. 129.

| Fig. 82 | Fig. 83 |

An example of this poetic slippage between classification and presentation is demonstrated by German artist Karsten Bott's *One of Each (Von Jedem Eins) (1993 - ongoing)* (Fig. 82 & 83) from his 'Archive of Contemporary History' (1988 - ongoing). Bott collects artefacts from everyday life for his encyclopaedic project, the 'Archive of Contemporary History' (1988 – ongoing), and exhibits selections of this archive, creating site-specific installations that incorporate items found *in situ* in his personal collection, the encyclopaedic project rendering found objects and refuse as singularities.

Central to Bott's practice is his idiosyncratic system of classification that combines an explanatory and ironic taxonomy with a scientific one.[179] The collected objects are extensively cross-referenced, exposing the problematic nature of categorisation, for example, should a butcher's knife be filed under 'Occupations,', 'Death,' or the 'Kitchen'?[180] Bott's studio project is highly classified and cross-referenced, but when it is exhibited, objects are organised without captions explaining their presentation, so inviting viewers to form their own relationships based upon their familiarity with these everyday items. The translation from personal studio project to public exhibition is one of the removal of information, as the significance that Bott attributes to his collection remains private through the idiosyncratic method of the work's classification and display as it illuminates gaps in knowledge that are

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[179] I Reepen, 'Karsten Bott', in Schaffner, I & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, trans. P Cumbers, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 82.
[180] The Warhol: resources and lessons, *Artists who collect: Karsten Bott*, The Andy Warhol Museum, 2006, retrieved 21 June 2010, <http://edu.warhol.org/app_bott.html>.

opposed to the encyclopaedic impetus of the project. This is both a physical archive of material culture when stored within his studio and is also a site of interrelation when the work is exhibited as site-specific installations. In this way, each site requires different approaches to the structure of classifying objects and this in turn dictates ways the objects interrelate.

Fig. 84   Fig. 85

Historically, two projects that addressed the flexible nature of the archive were German art historian Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas (1924 – 29)* (Fig. 84) and French art theorist André Malraux's *Les Musée Imaginaire (The Museum without Walls) (1947)* (Fig. 85), both of which investigated alternative archival classification systems by utilising visual models of logic. Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas (1924 – 29)* was a project that repositioned photographic reproductions of classical works of art alongside images drawn from 1920s iconology (the way in which the content of an image constructs meaning) as opposed to traditional forms of art historical analysis that focused on stylistic, cultural, and chronological developments. The structure of *Mnemosyne Atlas (1924 – 29)* was a nexus between the homogeneity of the photographic reproduction (which removes the hierarchical indicators of materials and scale) and the juxtaposition of images (representing temporal and spatial heterogeneity).[181] Warburg utilised the associative nature of collecting in order to explore systems of cultural visuality and representation by exploring the 'iconology of the interval'.[182] For Warburg, this interval exposed congruencies between

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[181] B Buchloh, 'Warburg's paragon? The end of collage and photomontage in postwar Europe', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 52.

[182] B Dillon, *Collected works: Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas*, Frieze Magazine, 2004, retrieved 5 February 2012, <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/collected_works/>.

different models of image making, allowing the *Mnemosyne Atlas (1924 – 29)* to function as an example of a 'collective, social memory'.[183]
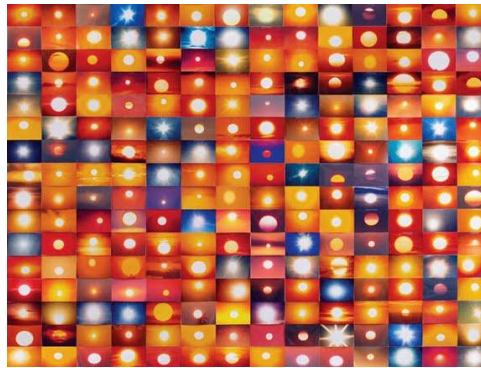
Fig. 86

Conversely, André Malraux's project *Les Musée Imaginaire (1947)* 'addresses the purely conceptual space of the human faculties: imagination, cognition, judgement'.[184] Malraux recognised that by reducing the art object to a photographic reproduction, the viewer could construct new relationships between images based on repositioning, association and imagination, signalling a new way of approaching art that was immediate, signalling a shift in the way that culture operated.[185] In using the *Les Musée Imaginaire (1947),* the viewer was encouraged to browse and select the order of images in a similar way to 'surfing' the Internet that forms the basis of many artistic practices, such as American artist Penelope Umbrico's *Suns (from Sunsets) from Flickr (2006 – ongoing)* (Fig. 86). Both Warburg's and Malraux's projects used the grid created by the photographic image to compare iconography as a form of personalised typology. This strategy has in turn impacted artistic projects such as American artist Douglas Blau's *The Naturalist Gathers (1992)* (Fig. 87) where individual images are collectively exhibited in sequences (both in a grid and a salon hang) through formal typologies and narrative associations and German artist Hans-Peter Feldmann's *Untitled (Eiffel Tower) (1992)* (Fig. 88) where iconographic typologies expose and question the role of authorship, uniqueness and originality by highlighting the highly constructed principles by which advertising and material culture depict contemporary life.

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[183] Buchloh, 'Warburg's paragon?', op. cit., p. 51.
[184] R Krauss, 'Postmodernism's museum without walls', in B W Ferguson, R Greenberg & S Nairne (eds), Routledge, London & New York, 1996, p. 241.
[185] A Malraux, *The voices of silence*, trans. S Gilbert, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1978, pp. 44 – 46.

Fig. 87   Fig. 88

Artists have also questioned this typological impetus of the archive. German artist Gerhard Richter's project *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* is a collected photographic compendium that provides source material for Richter's paintings, comprised of family photographs, newspaper clippings, and photographs from books, all selected for their amateur or dry documentary style, as opposed to Feldmann's slick advertising imagery. *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* relies upon an arbitrary structural arrangement, which seeks to remove the artist's aesthetic selection to represent the relationships between the collected photographic imagery.[186] American art and cultural theorist Benjamin Buchloh states that the photographic image is 'dynamic, contextual and contingent,' whose 'serial structuring of visual information implicit within it emphasize[s] an open form and a potential infinity' which places the subject of the photograph within 'perpetually altered activities, social relations, and object relationships'.[187] These object relationships become apparent when *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* (Fig. 89) is exhibited because it demonstrates the heterogeneity in collected material, not only in scale but also in iconography – the images within individual sheets, such as *Atlas Sheet 10 (1962)* (Fig. 90) do not conform to any regularity, following the original frames of the photographs, as opposed to the uniformity of their display. These images are more than just source material for the product of an artwork that contains the archival medium of photography; they exist within their own right as a historical document.

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[186] However the archiving of *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* and the rest of Richter's oeurve is far from arbitrary with Richter constructing an online repository that is systematically cross-referenced and detailed. See http://www.gerhard-richter.com.

[187] B H D Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's "Atlas": The Anomic Archive', *October*, vol. 88, Spring 1999, p. 131.

Fig. 89

Fig. 90

As an encyclopaedic historical site, the archive also serves as a structure that allows for the inclusion of altered or fabricated narratives. To this end artists subvert the archive's systematic methodology to question a dominant hegemony of history (an institutionalised form of collective memory), by focusing on the individual, the fragmentedm and the subjective by fabricating 'fictions' that fit within the 'factual' nature of the archive. In the project *The Fae Richards Photo Archive (1993 – 96)* (Fig. 91 & 92) American artist Zoe Leonard collaborated with American filmmaker Cheryl Dunne to create a photographic archive that documented the life of the fictitious actress and singer Fae Richards. Leonard's narrative positions the archive as a 'space of lost or forgotten stories,'[188] thereby forging the provenance of the imagery and its historical material to create an authentic biography, and through its

Fig. 91

Fig. 92

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[188] O Enwezor, *Archive fever: uses of the document in contemporary art*, International Centre For Photography, New York & Steidl Publishers, Gottingen, 2008, p. 44.

structural mimesis of institutional authority it fits seamlessly with the broader narrative of history. By doing so, Leonard gives a voice to an otherwise marginal figure in history, the African American woman, as a surrogate for other individuals whose cultural contribution was not documented and therefore omitted from collective memory.

As a site of information or 'data-space', the archive utilises a systematic approach to classification, however the archive's scope also aligns it with the *Wunderkammer* model. While the archive has the potential to be endlessly inclusive, in reality the archive's cosmological project, like any collection, relies on the collector's selection of what is incorporated. It is in this way that the archive's objectiveness reveals itself as a myth. Instead, the archive presents contingent, arbitrary, and subjective material within a structural framework that appropriates the language of 'fact' through documentary 'evidence'. This evidence as a form of embodied witness within the collected object is integral to understanding how artists construct open-ended narratives within the collection.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that collections are bound by an internal and external architecture that determines how the collection is organised not only structurally and conceptually but it is also framed by the context in which it is viewed. It established that the collection's organisational logic provides a framework in which the interrelation between objects constructs a way to approach the work. Using the *Wunderkammer* model as a structural reference point that represents juxtaposition, heterogeneity, and a lack of hierarchy, it establishes that the structure of the systematic collection exemplified by the museum represents continuity, taxonomy, and a structured display. These two models of collecting demonstrate a material and immaterial framework that correlates to a narrative structure, which artists use as a tool in the construction of meaning within their work. To do this, artists from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries engage with three sites of interrelation: the box, the tableau, and the archive, corresponding to a three-dimensional, two dimensional and data space.

Within these sites there are two structural approaches that provide distinctly different functions in how objects interrelate. One is a systematic form of Cartesian space, such as the grid, in which to plot relationships via the differences found in the homogeneity of the structure and the other is the chaotic juxtaposition of elements, such as the flatbed, in which a constellation of elements is collapsed within the site of the collection. As this chapter demonstrates, artists utilise both types of structures within their artistic practices, however, what emerges is that even within systematic and ordered spaces, artists still create collections that are idiosyncratic, discursive, and paradoxical.

Establishing how the box, tableau, and archive are utilised by artists provides an understanding about the narrative function of the collection and the systems of logic that construct these narratives. These sites of interrelation provide a framework that determines how objects interact within the space, with each other, and with the viewer. This framework is important in positioning how an object fulfils a mnemonic and metonymic function within the collection as used by artists in the construction of narratives. This function of the collected object will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Artists' Relics: The narrative condition of the art object

> While the point of the souvenir may be remembering, or at least the invention of memory, the point of the collection is forgetting – starting again in such a way that a finite number of elements create, by virtue of their combination, an infinite reverie.[189]

The aim of this chapter is to determine the narrative role of the object in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century artists' collections that are engaged with personalised histories by examining how the object embodies a mnemonic and a metonymic function. To determine this, the object must first be discussed in relation to an event. The first section, 'Witnessing experience: Artistic performance and the object,' investigates how the object performs a significant mnemonic and metonymic function in artistic performance for historical and contemporary artists whose work utilises both performative and collecting aspects. This section establishes two material registers of witness: the photograph, which documents the artistic performance in the practices of American artist Cindy Sherman and Emily Jacir; and the artefact, which serves as both a prop within and a trace of performance in the practices of American artist Mark Dion and German artist Joseph Beuys. Specifically, this section investigates artists who engage with culture through sites and constructs in the production of their work. This is important in establishing how the artist engages with performance as a 'theatre' through the interrelation of the collection.

The next two sections, 'Found object photograph as souvenir' and 'Relics of everyday life', both investigate the mnemonic and metonymic function of the object by using Twentieth-Century precedents to examine the artwork of contemporary artists whose practices centre on collecting. 'Found object photograph as souvenir' expands the concept of artistic performance to include the daily act of searching,

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[189] S Stewart, *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*, 9th edn, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2005, p. 152.

collecting, and compiling objects that uses the urban environment as *theatrum mundi* in what is both a collective and individual experience in the production of artwork. It examines the ways in which the found photograph functions as a souvenir of an event. It identifies the photograph's inability to act as a 'complete' mnemonic device and how this condition is compounded as a memory crisis within the system of the collection in the work of American artist Andy Warhol, German artist Gerhard Richter, and English artist Tacita Dean. The following section, 'Relics of everyday life', develops this idea further by examining how physical artefacts demonstrate a partial mnemonic function. Furthermore this section repositions the souvenir as a relic in which the object performs both a mnemonic and metonymic function within the practices of French artists Christian Boltanski and Annette Messager. This is significant in understanding how the object is situated as both a historical and a symbolic tool.

The last two sections focus on describing how the system of the collection and the ambiguity of the object as a signifier work together in the construction of narratives. 'A narrative addressed to oneself' examines how artists engage with the personalised nature of collections, by utilising the ambiguity of meaning inherent in objects for the construction of subjective histories which disrupt the factual presentation of knowledge. It also identifies the slippage of meaning that occurs in the translation from the construction of the work to the interpretation by the audience in the practices of American artist Fred Wilson and Russian artist Ilya Kabakov. The section 'Symbolic function of objects and the narrative metaphor of the collection' further investigates how artists construct narrative ambiguity by examining the temporality of their collections and how the mnemonic object is situated within it. It establishes the ability of the object to act as a signifier in the construction of new relationships through the collection, which is central to understanding the collection's narrative function as a visual rather than a textual construct.

Witnessing experience: Artistic performance and the object

In Chapter One, the Early Modern collections of the *curieux* and *viateur* were discussed in relation to a history of curiosity. This curiosity, which was fostered by many discoveries at the time, drove an interest in collecting through travel literature

and cabinets of curiosities. Both the textual account and physical artefact functioned specifically as evidence or souvenirs of significant events and the experiences that contributed to these events. This material evidence, coupled with the danger involved in their acquisition, established the *curieux* and *viateur* as 'figures of witness' in the documentation of the New World. During the Renaissance, the concept of witness did not reflect the rational objectivity and scientific impartiality that it would later seek to achieve in institutions from the Age of Enlightenment onwards. In this regard, material 'evidence' validated the authenticity of the experience and conversely the experience made the 'evidence' worthy and unique.

This reflexive system operates in much the same way today within photographs, providing simultaneously the documentation of events and a unique object of evidence. Since the advent of photography, witness is closely linked to the camera.[190] This is due to the photograph's capacity for accurate description and its 'ability to establish distinct relations of time and event, image and statement'.[191] As an 'objective' metonymic medium, the camera has become a ubiquitous recording device that transposes a physical reality into a pictorial reality of desire and consumption, promoting what French theorist Guy Debord calls the 'society of the spectacle'.[192] Utilised extensively in contemporary culture to document, advertise, serve as memento, and provide a tool of surveillance and voyeurism, the photograph embodies an object of nostalgia, desire, possession, and curiosity. To this end, artists use photography within their practices in many ways, however as a tool of documentation the photograph is instrumental to artists who have practices that are time-based or site-specific, ephemeral and performative.

From the 1960s onwards, Happenings, Fluxus and Performance Art all addressed the relationships between aspects of experience and witness, of being a participant and a spectator and presented the problematic nature of how to express these aspects as an art object to be displayed within a gallery, when the artwork existed as a conceptual and temporal event. While these movements sought to remove art from the context,

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[190] N M Shawcross, *Roland Barthes on photography: the critical tradition in perspective*, University Press of Florida, Gainsville, FL, 1997, p. ix.
[191] O Enwezor, *Archive fever: uses of the document in contemporary art*, International Centre For Photography, New York & Steidl Publishers, Gottingen, 2008, pp. 11 – 12.
[192] G Debord, *Society of the spectacle*, trans. K Knabb, Rebel Press, London, 2006.

commoditisation, and politics of institutional machinations and expand upon the definition of a work of art, they became indebted to the document as witness of the artist's intervention or event. Photography operates as the nexus within the dialectics of American artist Robert Smithson's site and non-site, where the photograph documents the transformation of a non-site (industrial wastelands or gallery space, for example) into a site through artistic intervention, as seen in *Non-site: Line of Wreckage (Bayonne, New Jersey) (1968)* (Fig. 93). In much the same way, performance as a temporal, ephemeral site-specific event is not only documented by but also exhibited as photography (and film) and objects (props or artefacts), for example, American artist Carolee Schneemann's *Up To And Including Her Limits (1973 – 76)* (Fig. 94), in which the harness and drawing can be seen as the physical evidence of the performance which is the artwork and vice versa, in which the video of the performance can be seen as the witness of the production of the physical artwork (i.e. the drawing and harness).

Fig. 93   Fig. 94

Within artistic performance, witness and experience are intrinsically related to the body and as an extension to the relationships between the body and the external environment, which includes the natural and urban environment and their societal structures. Specifically within the field of artistic collections, this operates as a way in which artists collect experiences and personas and through various formal strategies make them material within the artwork. This is demonstrated in photography by Cindy Sherman's and Emily Jacir's work and in how the photograph and object relate to Mark Dion and Joseph Beuys' work.

Sherman's photographic portraits represent a body of work in which she appropriates and portrays female 'characters' from visual culture, such as cinema, magazines, and art history and through her personification of these characters, collects them. Rather than being portraits of specific individuals, these images are a combination of stereotypical female figures that render Sherman's representations familiar yet anonymous and thus creating typological characters. In her film stills series, for example *Untitled Film Still #3 (1977)* (Fig. 95) Sherman uses the visual language and performative aspect of film genres such as film noir, including the iconic Barbara Stanwyck in 'Double Indemnity' (1944) (Fig. 96), to construct situations that propose a narrative reading and reflect the symbolic image making process of media.[193]

Fig. 95

Fig. 96

Sherman describes her process of acting as a way of '*becoming* a different person' in which 'something *else* takes over' and replaces her own identity as a self-determining subject.[194] The temporal nature of the event of making and the intuitive 'becoming' of the different characters is a way of collecting aspects that are at once personal and autobiographical and yet are universal and cultural. Sherman's body becomes the site of multiple personalities. She employs the methodology of collection, intuition, and association as a way of directing and making the work. Taking an aspect of the series that has not been explored within her archive, for

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[193] A Cruz, 'Movies, monstrosities and masks: twenty years of Cindy Sherman', in A Cruz, A Jones & E A T Smith, *Cindy Sherman: retrospective*, Thames and Hudson Inc., New York, 1997, p. 1 – 4.
[194] Sussler, B, *Cindy Sherman*, BOMB Magazine, 1985, retrieved 27 August 2011, < http://bombsite.com/issues/12/articles/638>.

example, a particular tone of colour or lighting, she constructs characters that serve to expand her representational tropes of women and the body.[195]

Fig. 97

In comparison, American artist Zoe Leonard also appropriates the visual iconology of cinema within her photographic project, *The Fae Richard's Photo Archive (1993 – 96)* (Fig. 97), which depicts a fictional African American actress, typecast as a mammy, struggling to be able to portray other characters. However, the narrative that Sherman's work creates is different from Leonard's historicising process. While both present fictions, Leonard subverts the souvenir documentation of actual events by her fabrication of the chronology of the photograph, whereas Sherman uses the photograph in its capacity as a storytelling medium (and one that is associated with film, a dominant medium of story-telling in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries) in which the language of narrative creates open-ended propositions in how they are to be interpreted and read. In this way, the seriality of Sherman's project and her embodiment of differing 'types' positions Sherman as an 'actor' in which her own body is the site of collected personas.

Emily Jacir's artwork, *Where We Come From (2001 – 03)* (Fig. 98), shares similarities with Sherman's idea of the artist's body as the site of accumulated experience. Rather than portraying different characters through a cinematic language, Jacir literally 'acts out' the requests of exiled Palestinians, experiencing and documenting their desires as a personal substitute or body double, the material outcome of which is the photographic souvenir. As the starting point for this project, Jacir asked Palestinians who have restricted access in their homeland due to the

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[195] ibid.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 'If I could do something for you anywhere in Palestine, what would it be?'[196] Due to the freedom of movement at the time afforded to Jacir by her American passport, she became a conduit in which her own position as a self-determining subject had been removed, replaced by the direction of others.[197] The ability of Jacir to traverse restricted borders still indicates a position of danger that serves to authenticate the documentation and witness of the events and circumstances of the Palestinian people in much the same way as it did in Renaissance travel accounts discussed in Chapter One. The idea of closed borders and inaccessible areas (not due to geography but due to political situations) seems to contradict the concept of globalism and an 'open' modern world, however what this highlights is a mechanism for globalism – the displacement of people through diaspora, migration, and exile. While these narratives highlight the politics of travel, they also demonstrate the artist's body as medium for others, a tool of experience that renders the site of collection internal.

Fig. 98

Within Jacir's work, performance functions as the medium, with the photographic object acting as the documentation of collective experience on the artist's body. Jacir's practice is wholly concerned with the narratives of others as a way of collating and presenting them both as part of history and as personal memento. Sherman's practice also engages with narrative, but rather than using the personal language of real people, her work engages with the iconographic language of

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[196] T J Demos, 'The ends of exile: towards a coming universality', in N Bourriaud (ed.) *Altermodern: Tate Triennial*, Tate Publishing, London, 2009, p. 85.
[197] Bell, K, *Another country*, Frieze Magazine, 2008, retrieved 26 August 2011, <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/another_country/>.

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cinema, the universal rather than the individual. The photograph is used as a tool in which to translate experiences to others after the event, however artists also engage with the artefact of performance as a physical indicator of action.

In an archaeological sense an artefact is the material remnant of a past society that serves as an object of study. It is a clue to be decoded, a puzzle piece to help complete the pattern of a particular culture, a fragmentary object as opposed to a photographic 'snap shot' that documents a temporal and spatial totality.[198] As a material witness, the artefact is an object that requires interpretation. While an artefact is reflective of the context in which it was made, its relationship with that context is not explicitly present in it without other supporting evidence. This is demonstrated by Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco, whose *Yielding Stone (Piedra Que Cede) (1992)* (Fig. 99) is a plasticine ball, which was rolled through city streets, collecting impressions of the landscape and accumulating specimens it came into contact with. While this work visibly displays the evidence of its construction through the process of its making in which the imprint of Orozco's actions and the embedding of material traces expose a specific spatial and temporal urban environment, a photograph of the work in progress serves to contextualise the object, placing the artefact in a series of relationships outside the non-site of the gallery space.

Fig. 99

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[198] The term 'snapshot' in this sense is based upon French theorist Thierry de Duve's concept of both the 'time exposure' and the 'snapshot' in that these photographic documentations are both intended to capture events as an 'abrupt artefact' like a snapshot yet they are also composed pictures designed as 'natural evidence'. See T de Duve, 'Time exposure and the snapshot: the photograph as paradox', *October*, no. 5, Photography, Summer 1978, pp. 113 – 125.

Where the artist's performance in Orozco's work is the labour of its production and the evidence is the artefact and the photograph that serve to reveal the relational concept of the work, artistic performance exists as the labour of the artwork's exhumation from a site and the embodiment of the institutional processes of the artefact's acculturation within the practice of Mark Dion. For Dion, performance acts as a methodology of production through the embodiment of the fieldwork process as opposed to the material of the work. Dion's practice consists of installations that present his own collections of natural and man-made specimens excavated from cultural and natural sites that appropriate both institutional (objective) and idiosyncratic (subjective) forms of collecting, for example, *Anthropology Department,* from *Angelica Point (1994)* (Fig. 100)*. A Metre of Meadow,* from *Unseen Fribourg (1992)* (Fig. 101) utilises photography's ability to magnify minute organisms, demonstrating the diversity of insects living within a seemingly barren landscape, yet the artwork is still presented as an installation, with photography fulfilling a conceptual and practical role as a format in which to present the importance of microscopic life forms in an environment.
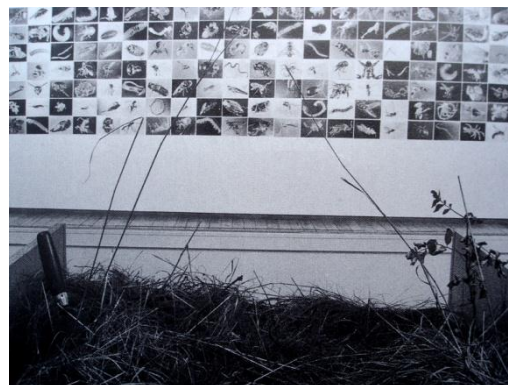
Fig. 100   Fig. 101

Even though the outcome of Dion's work are installations of artefacts, in works created for museums (the Tate Modern in London, in this example), Dion is interested in sharing the process of construction with museum visitors in order to create a dialogue about how institutions mediate society's understanding of historical, cultural and natural phenomena. To do this, Dion performs each role that creates the institutionalisation of the object within the museum, the processes that

makes a field sample embedded, preserved and catalogued in the institutional system. For example, in *A Metre of Meadow,* from *Unseen Fribourg (1992)*, Dion worked within the gallery space for roughly the first ten days of the exhibition, searching leaf litter for invertebrates, preserving and identifying specimens.[199] This allowed the public to witness this process of classification in order to make the viewer aware about how cultural 'ideas of nature' are constructed.[200]

Fig. 102

Dion's installations each embody both an artwork in its own right and an artefact of the process of its making made public through Dion's performances and the occasional photograph, for example, Mark Dion, *The Great Munich Bug Hunt (1993)* (Fig. 102). In this way, photography is used to document Dion's performances as opposed to autonomous works of art and therefore they are not exhibited as artefacts. This is partly because Dion's performance acts as a personal technical and conceptual tool to compile the work rather than the performance of a work itself. It also enables the audience to view the work in progress as a way of critiquing hidden museological practices in 'real time' allowing the viewer to experience the event, rather than viewing a representation of it as a form of spectacle or disembodied parody of process. However, Dion's methodology of production shares similarities with Sherman's in the creation of the artist as a site of collected experience, through Dion's 'collection' of professional experience related to the production of the art artefact by embodying and performing each role.

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[199] M Kwon, 'Interview: Miwon Kwon in conversation with Mark Dion', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & M Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p. 25.
[200] The Warhol: resources and lessons, *Artists who collect: Mark Dion*, The Andy Warhol Museum, 2006, retrieved 21 June 2010, <http://edu.warhol.org/app_dion.html>.

Fig. 103   Fig. 104

Furthermore, Dion's use of the artefact to direct a collective experience can be traced to Joseph Beuys's practice, especially his idea of 'Social Sculpture', an example of which is *7000 Oaks (1982)* installed on the occasion of Documenta 7 in Kasel (Fig. 103 & 104), and based upon an interactive dialogue, much like Dion's discursive performances.[201] The project (still ongoing in many locations world-wide as part of Beuys' original plan) pairs trees (symbols of life and perpetual change) with basalt steles (symbols of stasis and eternity), designed to create living monuments that change public spaces into social spaces through collective participation. In this work the artefacts of this collective experience hold both a symbolic meaning and exist as evidence of a performance. This duality is inherent throughout Beuys' practice with objects acting as both props within his performances and as artefacts. Beuys's performance or 'Action', *I Like America and America Likes Me (1974)* (Fig. 105), (which is preserved through photographic documentation) involved a co- habitation

Fig. 105

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[201] Furthermore, Dion's use of symbolic objects such as blackboards, sleds, animal toy surrogates, and specimen jars are 'visual quotations that express his indebtedness to Beuys'. L G Corrin, 'Mark Dion's project: a natural history of wonder and a wonderful history of nature', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & M Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p. 49.

with a coyote in the René Block Gallery in New York as part of an *oeuvre* concerned with ritual as a form of transformation and healing. Throughout the 'Action', objects that ritualised the shamanistic performance mediated Beuys's interactions with the coyote. These objects or artefacts were symbols of Beuys's personal mythology of healing (felt, fat) that were intended to evoke experience rather than knowledge, stating, 'Art is not there to provide knowledge in direct ways. It produces deepened perceptions of experience…Art is not there to be simply understood, or we would have no need of art'.[202] In this way, an important function of the artefact within Beuys' work is its symbolic nature, but also the viewer's personal interpretation of it. Furthermore, Beuys stated that 'one is forced to translate thought into action and action into object'.[203] This made his 'Actions' the creative process by which an art object is formed, either as a way in which the prop 'gains new life by subsequently becoming a work of art' or how it functions as a 'relic of the earlier event'.[204]

Fig. 106

Due to their placement in the gallery, Dion's and Beuys's artefacts from their performances exist simultaneously as artworks in their own right and as a souvenir of experience, in a similar way to American artist Gordon Matta-Clarke's souvenirs of his building cuts, such as *Bronx Floors (1972 – 73)* (Fig. 106), which function as a material witnesses of an event. In this way the photograph and artefact both have a

[202] E Rekow, *Joseph Beuys: actions*, Walker Art Centre, 2004, retrieved 21 August 2011, <http://www.walkerart.org/archive/5/9D43B5DB685147C46167.htm>.

[203] Joseph Beuys, 'Interview with Willoghby Sharp' (1969), in Carin Kuoni, (ed.), *Energy Plan for the western man: Joseph Beuys in America*, Four Walls Eight Windows, New York, 1990, p. 92, cited in M Rosenthal, 'Joseph Beuys: staging sculpture' in M Rosenthal, *Joseph Beuys: actions, vitrines, environments*, Tate Publishing, London, 2004, p.42.

[204] M Rosenthal, 'Joseph Beuys: staging sculpture' in M Rosenthal, *Joseph Beuys: actions, vitrines, environments*, Tate Publishing, London, 2004, pp. 42 – 43.

mnemonic and metonymic purpose in that as documentation, they create a record of an event, preserving an ephemeral act within a form of memory and as an artwork they represent that event symbolically.

Performance functions within Sherman's practice as the preparation and presentation of female typologies, within Jacir's project it represents as a directive experience determined by others, for Dion it is the specialised and institutional process of making the artwork, and for Beuys it functions as a symbolic ritual. Furthermore, even though Sherman and Dion utilise performance as a way of embodying experience through a specific role or character, the artistic outcomes of their performances are different with Sherman's being the image presented through photography and Dion's being the object as an artefact. Both the artefact and the photograph provide a way for the viewer to engage with artistic performance after the event. While both outcomes function mnemonically and metonymically, within these practices the photograph represents a contextualising medium where as the artefact represents a fragmented object of witness that requires interpretation. Through the presentation of the Sherman's and Jacir's photographs and Dion's and Beuys' artefacts within the interrelation of the collection, the artists' conceptual narratives appear allowing the work to have greater social meaning as a theatre of experience.

Found object photograph as souvenir

While the photograph depicts an image (a representation), it also exists as an object through the form of ephemera – advertising, newspapers, holiday snaps, postcards. Ephemera function as massed produced forms of graphic communication designed for personal possession and consumption and are more often than not discarded. However, some forms of ephemera such as baseball cards and postcards become collectables – produced in series that are designed to be easy to access and possess. 'Collections of ephemera serve to exaggerate certain dominant features of the exchange economy: its seriality, novelty and abstraction' and are thus the 'ultimate form of consumerism'.[205] As symbolic objects, photographs function as souvenirs.

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[205] Stewart, *On longing*, op. cit., p. 167.

This dual function of the photographic object (used here as both tangible objects and in their most abstract form as virtual photographs found on the internet through sites such as Flickr and Facebook) both as an item that participates in cultural and historical systems and as a symbolic object of memory (cultural and personal) is integral to the artistic practices of Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, and Tacita Dean.

Fig. 107

Warhol's *Time Capsules (1974 – 87)* use the found object, or *objet trouvés,* of newspaper, photographs, correspondence, gifts collected from his everyday life and his studio practice, for example, *Time Capsule #44 (1973)* (Fig. 107). Warhol's *Time Capsules* are ironically named because rather than functioning as a site of significance (which time capsules traditionally do), they function as a '*memento hominem,* a register of [his] everyday life'.[206] Warhol's collection is indicative of a compulsive yet strategic form of collecting *oneself* through what French theorist Jean Baudrillard describes as 'the object in which one mourns for oneself', which plays out in a cyclical game of birth and death through the serial nature of the collection.[207] Baudrillard further argues that this does not secure an individual's immortality as some kind of *mirror-object,* but rather functions as a cycle of birth and death played out within an *object-system,* which like Freud's *fort/da/fort/da,* allows the collector to engage in a form of serial play of absence and presence that symbolically

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[206] J W Smith, 'Andy Warhol', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 279.
[207] See, J Baudrillard, 'The system of collecting' in J Elsner & R Cardinal (eds), *The cultures of collecting*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1994, p. 17.

transcends death.[208] While 'normal'[209] collectors engage with this aspect within the private space of their personal collection, Warhol's *Time Capsules* are created for and positioned within the greater *object-system* of History, which functions within the museum as a collective cultural form of symbolic transcendence against obsolescence and death (or forgetfulness). By doing so, Warhol constructs the myth of his celebrity within the historicising system as a form of immortality. However, due to the profuseness and chaos of his accumulation, Warhol's archival project seeks to destroy the order of the archive rendering its mnemonic function useless, while paradoxically providing insight into the cultural and historical time period of his life.

This highlights an important duality inherent within the artist's collection: its function as both an *aide-mémoire* and as a memory fugue. Richter's *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)*, discussed in the last chapter as an example of the subversion of the archival structure due to its typological heterogeneity, can also be read as a historicising tool that maps personal and collective experience through the collation of photographic imagery. Buchloh states that Richter's *Atlas* should be understood as an anomic archive that is positioned 'within the dialectics of amnesia and memory'.[210] The formal structure of his photographic project creates a continuous field of imagery that can be read in total as a *studium* in which specific images of concentration camp victims, which first appeared in *Atlas Sheet 11 (1963)* (Fig. 108),[211] appear as a *punctum*, rupturing what Buchloh describes as the 'mnemonic experience'.[212] *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* charts the social memory that occurs in image production, specifically the cultural disorientation and alienation of post-World War

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[208] ibid.

[209] A 'normal' collection represents a private, specialised and idiosyncratic form of collecting, distinct from artists' collections, whose sole purpose is to create a collection rather than an artwork, for example, someone who collects bottle tops or steam engines. Grasskamp, op. cit., p. 138.

[210] Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's "Atlas": the anomic archive', op. cit., p. 143.

[211] This particular sheet is illustrative of the first reference to the holocaust that Richter placed within his archive. This is significant as it reflects a collective 'crisis of memory' that Richter (from East Germany) lived though, in which the repression of historical memory (of the holocaust) was replaced with banal images of everyday life and consumerism (which he was to experience upon his transition to West Germany in 1961). Making *Atlas* a specific work about the 'perpetual pendulum between the death of reality in the photograph and the reality of death in the mnemonic image', ibid., p. 144.

[212] Buchloh uses the terms, 'studium' and 'punctum' coined by French theorist Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, as a way of demonstrating the duality of the photographic imagery in *Atlas*. Both terms describe two modes of reading a photograph: studium which allows for the 'apprehension of the obvious information provided by the image, the second one defining a peculiar point of contact between spectator and photograph' which is 'highly subjective and unpredictable, in which the
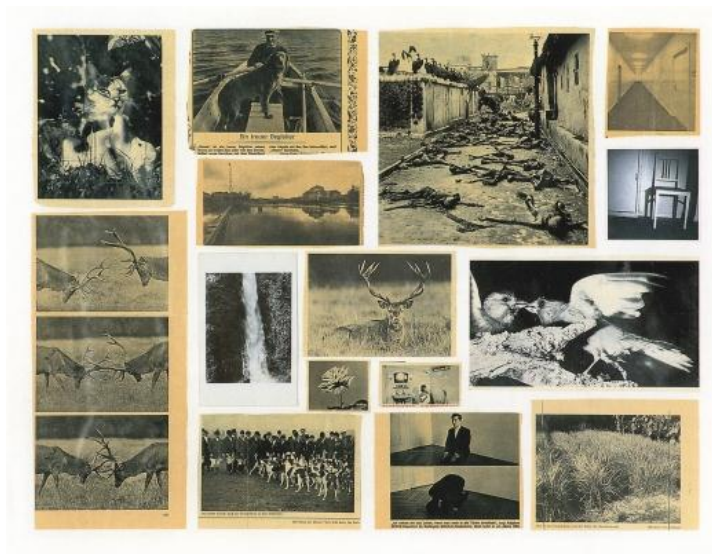
Fig. 108

Two Germany, seen through the anomic banality of Richter's imagery but it also charts a personal way of seeing. As a quotidian intuitive practice, the *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* project presents a methodological approach to the world and Richter's experience with it.[213] In *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)*, the images Richter collected act as symbolic objects of collective memory disassociated from their context. Through their selection and collection within the structure of the work, the images can be positioned as souvenirs of Richter's interaction and exposure to the media images around him. In its inception, *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* was comprised of amateur family photographs both found and personal, which Buchloh recognises as souvenirs.[214] However, the inclusion of media imagery within *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* can also be understood as souvenirs. This is due in part to the fact that they were collected. English museologist Susan Pearce defines the function of the souvenir as being able to 'make public events private and move history into the

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perception of the spectator is "pricked".' Ibid. See, R Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. R Howard, Hill and Wang, New York, 1981. To define these terms further, this dissertation utilises the reading proposed by theorist Colin McCabe, in which, 'The *studium* captures the relation to the referent by placing it within the comprehensible world of objects. The *punctum* indicates that moment at which the referent touches the subject, destroying the world of objects, and the moment of comprehension disclosing the drives that make the world comprehensible'. See, C McCabe, 'Bathes and Bazin: the ontology of the image' in J M Rabaté (ed.), *Writing the image after Roland Barthes*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1997, p. 74.

[213] There are also methodological similarities between Richter's *Colour Chart* paintings (1966-ongoing) and *Atlas*. The *Colour Chart* paintings are an abstraction of the continuity of personal choice and how that can be mapped through the serial nature of the collection to become a narrative of chance that exposes patterns of random nature.

[214] Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's "Atlas": the anomic archive', op. cit., p. 136.

personal sphere, giving each person a purchase on what would otherwise be impersonal and bewildering experiences'.[215] This is seen within the historical context of Richter's project. Richter is in a unique position to record the changes that post-World War Two Germany experienced from the advent of advertisements, to the acknowledgement of the Holocaust and the victims of the Nazis as the censorship of information including imagery within the German media began to relax. Richter was able to reflectively respond to these experiences, providing a personal context in which to reframe historical trauma. *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* exists as both a physical artefact of historical events and a personalised history of experience.

What makes Richter's project significant is his use of banal images: even the images of concentration camp victims have a banality that is associated with the removal from their context through their placement within the work's collective seriality, but also through the reduced impact such images of violence have on the contemporary viewer due to the continual barrage of violent imagery in today's media from news sources to television programs. So while *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* functions as a souvenir, the nostalgia associated with this form of collecting is removed, which positions this collection within the other aspect of the souvenir, of bringing the past into the present, not as a mnemonic device but as an abstraction of collective and personal memory. Such abstraction serves to highlight the aspect all collections engage with to varying degrees, in the form of the dialectical relationship between memory and amnesia, or what Buchloh describes as 'anomie', a state in which a feeling of alienation is caused by a sense of absence of a supportive social or moral framework. This replaces the site or context of the work from one that upholds the narrative of history to one that examines aspects of things discarded from the construction of history due to their depiction of banal imagery, positioning the work as a documentation of non-sites. What this means is that the imagery collected by removal from their context ceases to function as a marker of important events or people and instead becomes ambiguous as traces in which meaning, significance, and associations are no longer tied to specific events but are rather contextualised by the formal archival presentation of the work and the associations it elicits in the

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[215] Pearce, op. cit., p. 72.

viewer (which is different to a fetishistic collection that mirrors the desire of the collector).

Pearce believes that a souvenir collection is about creating a narrative of a unique personalised self and imposing that vision on the world.[216] However, Richter's project challenges this idea due to its latent authorial voice. Even though each of the images were selected by Richter and therefore reflect him, they are not selected to represent him. While the selection of imagery within *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* traces the personal aesthetics (or in this case 'anti-aesthetics') and psyche of Richter, the viewer is left to determine the contextual meanings inherent within each sheet based upon their own interpretations informed by personal associations. The requirement of the viewer to interpret the contextual narrative also occurs in Tacita Dean's project *Floh (2001)* (Fig. 109), which like Richter's *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* uses found photographs in the construction of the work. However, where Richter's project

Fig. 109

exists spatially through the construction of 'sheets', the images in Dean's *Floh (2001)* form a wordless book, where photographs collected from flea markets around the world are placed within a singular context to be 'read'. Dean's found photographs demonstrate that the souvenir is an 'incomplete' and 'impoverished' object that requires a narrative to complete it (which the collection does).[217] By placing disparate photographs into the interrelation of the collection, Dean questions whether the images have something to say collectively. English art historian and

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[216] ibid., p. 73.
[217] Stewart posits that the souvenir is an object that serves as a 'trace of an authentic experience', representing 'not the lived experience of its maker but the "secondhand" experience of its possessor/owner'. Furthermore it must serve as an incomplete object in order to function as a sign and therefore be 'supplemented by a narrative discourse'. See Stewart, *On longing*, op. cit., pp. 135 – 137.

theorist Mark Godfrey suggests that these found photographs represent a 'messy and necessary kind of memory' that act against the obsolescence of analogue photography in the wake of digitalisation and with it an impact on 'the amateur treatment of photography both at the moment of exposure and at the moment of storage'.[218]

American curator Okwui Enwezor suggests that *Floh (2001)* also represents a way of documenting and examining human traits or types as an ethnographic exercise (also as opposed to a form of collective memory).[219] This typology of a universal humanity can be seen within the images in their composition (what is our collective idea about how a photograph should look), the way people choose to present themselves (what they choose to be photographed with, how they stand, etc.) and through the everyday phenomena depicted (what are the subject's daily lives, what do they do and what do they have around them). However, the archival impetus of *Floh (2001)* serves to position it, like Richter's *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)*, within the 'dialectics between amnesia and memory' that Buchloh identifies. This is due to the distancing that occurs by rendering the subject an object through the photograph by the destruction of the photograph's original context in both its found nature (which paradoxically draws attention to its lost quality) and its recontextualisation within the collection.

American art theorist Hal Foster agrees with Buchloh's position that the archive represents a failure in collective memory, or 'memory-crisis'.[220] However, rather than only representing anomie, Foster positions the artist's collection between anomie and allegory, which allows artists to remedy this memory crisis through counter memory.[221] Within *Floh (2001)* this becomes a 'collective counter memory'. Rather than speaking to specific social and cultural constructions, the unresolved and

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[218] M Godfrey, 'Photography found and lost: on Tacita Dean's Floh', *October*, vol. 114, Autumn 2005, pp. 113 – 114.

[219] Enwezor, op. cit., p. 40.

[220] Foster uses this term to define the mnemonic loss that occurs within the archive based upon the trope Richard Terdiman uses in R Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the memory crisis*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1993, and Daniel Heller-Roazen's understanding that this memory crisis is natural to the function of the archive in D Heller-Roazen, 'Tradition's Destruction: on the Library of Alexandria', *October*, vol. 100, Spring 2002, cited in H Foster, 'Archives of modern art', *October*, vol. 99, Winter 2002, p. 86.

[221] H Foster, 'An archival impulse', *October*, vol. 110, Autumn 2004, pp. 3-22.

open-ended nature of Dean's work allows for a personal interpretation by the viewer, informed by their own social and cultural position, which in turn represents a form of non-historical personal memory where the viewer engages with the familiar aspects of the images and constructs an imagined context based upon this. This counter memory can emerge because there is 'no competition between memory and photography' in the images of anonymous strangers.[222] The people within these photographs are unknowable individually yet are knowable in some regards typologically, which assists the viewer in interpretation of the images. Furthermore, it is this opacity of the photograph, the potential for interpretation that attracts the artist and the viewer to engage with it initially, like a Surrealist found object.[223]

Warhol, Richter, and Dean all engage with the dialectical condition of the collection as both a site of memory and order, and a site of amnesia and chaos. They all utilise the found photograph as a souvenir, subverting its mnemonic significance, with Warhol positioning it as a souvenir of himself within a greater Historical system of memory, Richter investigating its anomic potential by removing the souvenir's nostalgia, and Dean using the found photograph in the construction of a personal counter memory against the silence of its anonymity. In this regard, the found photograph is paradoxically both an agent of memory and amnesia. While it possesses photography's function to document a specific time and location as an *aide-mémoire* that can be consulted and studied, it also signals a crisis in memory due to its anonymity in which the specific significance and context of the image is lost. When placed within the 'memory crisis' of the archive the found photograph, having been stripped of its mnemonic potential, performs a metonymic function. In this way the found photograph functions like an artefact or relic.

Relics of everyday life

Historically, the definition of unique objects is based upon their unrepeatable singular status (even in man-made objects), rarity and unusual qualities (which included their intrinsic physical attributes but also their extrinsic symbolic associations). This concept of the unique object has expanded in the twentieth

[222] Godfrey, op. cit., p. 104.
[223] ibid., p. 115.

century to include *everyday* and *found*[224] objects, images and texts, which include those described by French theorist Jean Baudrillard as 'marginal' but also includes refuse, ephemera, mass-produced and functional objects.[225] When Marcel Duchamp exhibited his readymade *Fountain (1917)* (Fig. 110), not only did it herald a new way of seeing the art object (and conversely everyday objects) and artistic authorship but it also brought the everyday into the gallery space − which through this recontextualisation transformed it into a unique object. This is reflected in Dutch theorist Ernst van Alphen's position that the artist's selection of trivial objects transforms them into reified objects.[226]

Fig. 110

Simultaneously developing alongside the unique object's material condition is its use as a symbolic object. For American literary theorist Susan Stewart, the unique object represents a souvenir of a particular experience − it is a mnemonic and metonymic device that authenticates the experience of the viewer.[227] In this way, the unique object functions as a relic. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'relic' as an 'object esteemed and venerated because of association with a saint or martyr; souvenir, memento; (plural) remains, corpse; a survivor or remnant left after decay, disintegration, or disappearance; and a trace of some past or outmoded practice,

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[224] The term 'found' in this aspect refers to the art historical term 'found object' or *objet trouvé,* which inherently carries with it the paradoxical condition of being lost by removal from its original context.

[225] M Winzen, 'Collecting – so normal, so paradoxical', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, trans. A Böger, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, pp. 22 – 31.

[226] E van Alphen, 'Archival obsessions and obsessive archives', in M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008, p. 66.

[227] Stewart further states that the souvenir 'represents not the lived experience of its maker but the "secondhand" experience of its possessor/owner'. Stewart, op. cit., pp. 134 – 135.

custom, or belief'.[228] A relic is thus significant not because of its material traits but because it *exists* as an indicator of its past social, political, cultural, and historical position, the value of which is due to the symbolic nature of its existence ascribed to it by an individual or a society. In this sense the 'object bears witness: its possession is an introduction to history'.[229] But what does the object witness? Is an object that has been removed from its original context and placed within the system of the collection capable of reflecting history? Is there only one interpretation of the narrative the object represents? How do the artist and the viewer intervene with the object's narrative? French artists Christian Boltanski and Annette Messager explore the condition and potential of the relic to impart meaning in ways that differ from its traditional definition.

Boltanski's practice investigates the received ideas of consciousness, memory, and death through what he refers to as 'strange objects'[230] (which are paradoxically 'normal' such as found photographs of people and everyday objects), positioning them within a dialectic of the relic. Boltanski states 'there is something contradictory in my work, in that it is about relics but at the same time it's very much against relics'.[231] Like Stewart's souvenirs, these objects are incomplete, having been removed from their original context, the knowledge of which is lost to the viewer, leaving in its absence 'a trace of meaning that lingers like an aura of possibility'.[232] It is precisely this condition of strangeness in the 'normalised' everyday that Boltanski investigates as material in his work, especially as it relates to the individual viewer's felt experience and what he describes as 'small memory':

> Part of my work has been about what I call 'small memory'. Large memory
> is recorded in books and small memory is all about little things […] Part of
> my work then has been about trying to preserve 'small memory', because

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[228] Merriam-Webster, *Relic*, Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2011, retrieved 25 November 2011, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/relic>.
[229] M Rheims, *The strange life of objects*, Atheneum Publishers, New York, NY, 1961, p. 211.
[230] T Garb, 'Tamar Garb in conversation with Christian Boltanski', in T Garb, D Kuspit & D Semin (eds), *Christian Boltanski*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p. 17.
[231] ibid., p. 19.
[232] D Kuspit, 'In the cathedral/dungeon of childhood: Christian Boltanski's *Monument: The Children of Dijon*', in T Garb, D Kuspit & D Semin (eds), *Christian Boltanski*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p.94.

often when someone dies, that memory disappears. Yet that 'small memory' is what makes people different from one another, unique.[233]

To do this Boltanski uses the 'genre of the inventory'[234] as a way of questioning the possibility of knowing someone who is absent through his or her things, such as in *Inventory of Objects that Belonged to a Resident of Oxford (1973)* (Fig. 111). American literary theorist Nancy Shawcross notes that 'Boltanski insinuates that the dead remain nothing more than the fictitious pictures derived from what is left behind either in photographs or in possessions'.[235] While the viewer is aware of the 'small' memory that should be illuminated by observing the photographed objects, instead the objects act as metonyms for the viewer's personal experiences and relationships to similar items.[236] In this way, the possessions of the Oxford student act as relics through their survival of their dead owner, however, Boltanski questions the everyday object of 'small memory' to have the same resonance that a religious relic for example has in the psyche of the viewer.

Fig. 111

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[233] Garb, op. cit., p. 19.

[234] M Perloff, ' "What has occurred only once": Barthes's Winter Garden/Boltanski's archives of the dead', in J M Rabaté (ed.), *Writing the image after Roland Barthes*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1997, p. 45.

[235] N M Shawcross, 'The filter of culture and the culture of death: how Barthes and Boltanski play the mythologies of the photograph' in J M Rabaté (ed.), *Writing the image after Roland Barthes*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1997, p. 68.

[236] Perloff, op. cit., pp. 45 – 47.

In contrast to his inventories, Boltanski's later 'Monuments' series questions the mythic status of the relic by exposing its ambiguous 'fictions' through the appropriation of the relic's language – especially its holy aura, for example, *Monument: The Children of Dijon (1986)* (Fig. 112 & Fig. 113). Installed in the Chapelle de la Salpêtrière in Paris, *Monument* utilises the lighting and visual logic of shrines, but substitutes the faces of saints with the faces of children, so that the universal iconography of a significant figure of contemplation is replaced with the anonymous (in the sense that these children are unknown to the general viewer) multitude of individuals. This creates a paradox in the unique object that is at the heart of Boltanski's *oeuvre,* as the work oscillates between the universal, general, and collective and the individual, specific, and personal, creating an ambiguity that renders his objects 'strange'.
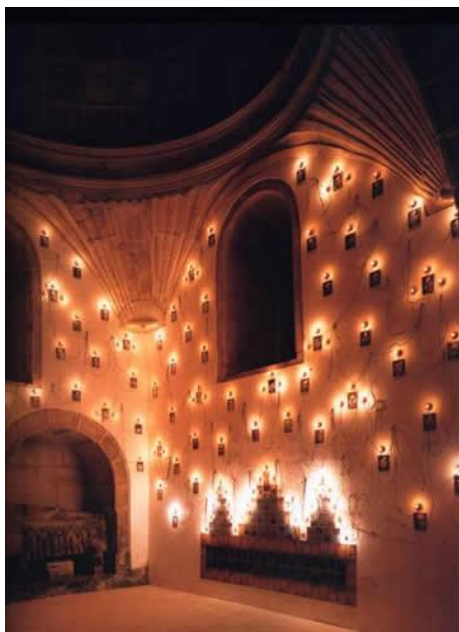
Fig. 112   Fig. 113

Boltanski further subverts the logic of the relic by reusing and re-configuring his photographs so that the image of a specific person becomes a signifier of a multitude of dead anonymous individuals, demonstrating the paradoxical and ambiguous nature of the unique object as both normal and extraordinary, anonymous and memorialising. By transforming mass-produced objects, such as the clothes in *Reserve (Réserve) (1990)* (Fig. 114) into symbols of individual people, Boltanski renders his objects metonyms of unique experience. These mass-produced items are

universal through their function as clothing, creating objects with which the viewer can identify with. As a metonym, these clothes represent individual lives (including the viewer's), making the work function as a fictional monument in which the viewer also participates. In contrast, Annette Messager's installation *The Story of Dresses*,

Fig. 114   Fig. 115

(*Histoires des Robes*) (detail) *(1988 – 92),* (Fig. 115), which displays dresses with memories and associations in the form of drawings and photographs as coffins with bodiless corpses, focuses on the object as a metaphor for the female body. The bodies in question (apart from the green dress that represents her mother) symbolise her own multiple identities.[237] Messager's practice investigates the dichotomies inherent in being a woman and an artist and uses the language of clichés to subvert and re-address this condition. Messager states, 'I always feel that my identity as a woman and as an artist is divided, disintegrated, fragmented and never linear, always multifaceted'.[238] *The Story of Dresses* and other works such as *My Collection of Proverbs* (*Ma Collection de Proverbes*) *(1974)* (Fig. 116), a group of embroideries of French folk sayings about women (all disparaging) can be read as relics of the intangible stereotypes of women that, through Messager's subversion and translation into objects, displays the 'discursive play and shifting contexts [that] quietly

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[237] Messager uses different personae to create her artworks, '*Artiste*' (artist), '*Collectionneuse*' (collector), '*Femme Practique*' (practical woman), '*Colporteuse*' (peddler) and '*Truqueuse*' (trickster). S Conkelton, 'Annette Messager's carnival of dread and desire', in S Conkelton & C S Eliel, *Annette Messager*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA & The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 1995, p. 35.

[238] Eliel, C S, "Nourishment you take': Annette Messager, influence and the subversion of images', in S Conkelton & C S Eliel, *Annette Messager*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA & The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 1995, p. 67.

challenges the authority of a single and absolute meaning'.[239] This reading expands upon the use of the relic as a trace of an outmoded custom or belief but also upon the
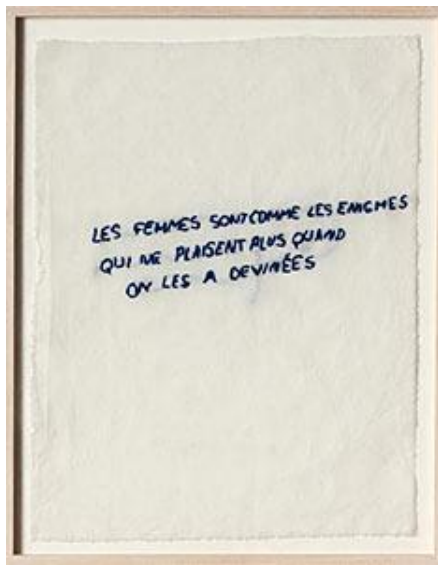
Fig. 116

Fig. 117

religious significance of the relic. In Messager's work the theatrical function of the ritual object (effigies, votives, incantations, shrines) is employed as a form of offering to, but also as a transgression of, feminine clichés. Making these clichés concrete through needlework – for example, 'If women were good, God would have one' – serves to highlight their absurdity and also render them personal. In Messager's work produced under the persona 'Annette Messager Collectionneuse', for example, *The Wedding of Mlle. Annette Messager* (*Le Mariage de Mlle. Annette Messager*) *(1971)* (Fig. 117)*,* the relic also functions as a faux autobiographical memento chronicling the rites of passage for women (in this case marriage) through the auspices of one woman, Messager, which serves as the inverse of Boltanski's *Monuments* that use individuals in the depiction of universal monument to humanity. For this work, Messager collected wedding announcements and photos from newspapers, substituting her own name for that of the bride.[240] By positioning herself as a stereotype repeating the act of marriage she challenges the chronology and veracity of personal experience by incorporating the found images of others into her own narrative of history.

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[239] Conkelton, op. cit., p.19.
[240] C Grenier, *Annette Messager*, Flammarion, Paris, 2001, p. 51.

Both Boltanski's and Messager's work utilise collections of quotidian objects as a way to imbue the logic of a visual vernacular with a symbolic narrative through the appropriation of conventional relationships. Rather than engaging with historical or mythological meta-narratives, both artists conflate fiction with reality to destabilise the traditional function of the relic as an object of collective significance by placing it within an individual/collective dichotomy, which abstracts the object's symbolic function to create ambiguity allowing the relic to incorporate personal narratives and associations through the collection. Central to Boltanski's and Messager's work is the use of the collection as a site of interrelation to make the narrative function of their relics apparent.

A narrative addressed to oneself – the artist's proposal and viewer's interpretation

The ambiguity of the relic as a mnemonic and metonymic device serves to render the object as a signifier. This section investigates how this symbolic object helps to construct personal narratives through the 'theatre' of the collection and how the collection relies not only on the positioning of the artist but also the interpretation of the viewer to construct meaning. Specifically, this section examines how artists subvert the factual presentation of knowledge within the collection and utilise the metonymic nature of objects in the construction of subjective histories. It examines the practices of American artist Joseph Cornell, German artist Hannelore Baron, American artist Fred Wilson, and Russian artist Ilya Kabakov and compares them to the way in which the collection serves and autobiographical function in Baudrillard's *The System of Objects (1968).*

At the conclusion of the chapter, 'A marginal system: collecting', Baudrillard poses the question: 'can man ever use objects to set up a language that is more than a discourse addressed to himself'?[241] While Baudrillard is referring to the types of collections that private individuals engage with, it is a question that is worth asking of artists and their collections, especially given that German curator Matthias Winzen asserts that artists' collections function differently to other forms of collecting as they are reflect a private enterprise presented in the public area of the

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[241] Baudrillard, *The system of objects*, trans. J Benedict, 2nd edn, Verso, London, 2005, p. 114.

gallery.[242] As demonstrated above, both photographs and objects function as relics within artists' collections and therefore are able to act as signifiers within the space of the collection. However, Baudrillard does compel a significant observation: a collection is intrinsically linked to the collector. This autobiographical context is an area of collecting that artists engage with, for example, Messager's *oeuvre* operates by reinstating the subjective and possessive individual into the logic of the collection (she continuously positions her works as 'My'), which allows her to create faux identities that are ambiguously factual, especially through her desires that she plays out within her work. This condition of the collection finds comparison within Baudrillard's system of collecting, where each item acts symbolically as a unique object of personal passion that reflects the singularity of the individual through selection. Indeed, this phenomenon is equally true of the Early Modern *curieux* that collected, as discussed previously.[243] In this reading, the unique object becomes defined by the desire of the collector as a representation of a self embedded within the serial game of the collection (Messager's practice is illustrative of this, not only by her referral to her collections as 'games' but her strategic positioning of herself within the collection)[244].

This opens up a myriad of conceptual approaches in contemporary art that address the subjective role of the artist within the formation and presentation of personal collections and archives, such as Joseph Cornell's entire *oeuvre,* which Buchloh describes as 'self determination at its ultimate level of interiority'[245]; the historicising collections of Andy Warhol's *Time Capsules (1974 – 87)* that take personal archiving to its most absurd conclusion; and Karsten Bott's, *One of Each (Von Jedem Eins) (1993)*, whose classification of his collected items exposes his personal idiosyncratic and subjective associations. Conversely, the subjectivity inherent in artists' collections also manifests the opposite approach in which the artist becomes a conduit, rather than a presence within the collection as a way for the immaterial to become material in the work; for example, directive performance in Emily Jacir's *Where We Come From*, chance in Gerhard Richter's *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* and the

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[242] Winzen, op. cit., p. 22.

[243] For a compelling analysis of this see, S A Crane, 'Curious cabinets and imaginary museums' in S A Crane (ed.), *Museums and memory*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2000, p. 68.

[244] Grenier, loc. cit.

[245] B Buchloh, 'The museum fictions of Marcel Broodthaers', in A A Bronson & P Gale (eds), *Museums by artists*, Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada, 1983, pp. 49.

silence of the lost object in Tacita Dean's *Floh (2001)*. Like French theorist Michel Foucault's assertion that history exists as a fiction due to its inherently subjective position, these seemingly disparate approaches all engage with the fact that any type of collection have as their referent the collector and are therefore never truly objective.

The artistic impetus to collect one's self through the small scale of the case, reflects American theorist Susan Stewart's position that the miniature is a metaphor for the private, the interior and the personal.[246] French artist Marcel Duchamp, German artist Hannelore Baron and American artist Joseph Cornell all utilise the miniature aspect of the box as an artistic strategy that represent their own individual needs and desires. Through the structure of such sites, these artists engage in their own personalised narratives. Duchamp's, *Boîtes-en-valise* (1935 – 41) (Fig. 118), is a limited edition of a suitcase filled with miniature replicas of Duchamp's artworks, such as *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2 (1912)* (Fig. 119) and *50 cc of Paris Air (1919)* (Fig. 120).[247] Carried by Duchamp to America upon his self-imposed exile from Paris at the start of the Second World War, it preserved a record of his *oeuvre*

Fig. 118   Fig. 119   Fig. 120

that not only satirised the role of the artist as a travelling salesman but also parodies the museum.[248] Structurally, it unpacks to create a miniature museum, providing a method of display and a space of storage that contextualises Duchamp's work within

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[246] Stewart, *On longing,* pp. 37 – 69.
[247] These replicas, rather than being mass produced (as say souvenirs of important monuments would be), were laboriously produced by highly skilled Parisian artisans and these cases are viewed as artworks in their own right as opposed to reproductions, due in part to the change in scale.
[248] I Schaffner, 'Deep Storage', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 11.

the evolution of his practice. However, like Bloom, Duchamp intentionally disrupts the works chronology in order to demonstrate the conceptual relationships between artworks.

A different strategy of miniaturisation exists within the practices of Hannelore Baron and Joseph Cornell, who both utilised the intimate scale of the case to explore, represent and collect their own interior conditions, such as items of personal significance and dreams. As German theorist Walter Benjamin states,

> The interior is not just the universe but also the etui of the private individual. To dwell means to leave traces. In the interior, these are accentuated… The interior is the asylum of art. The collector is the true resident of the interior. He makes his concern the transfiguration of things.[249]

Fig. 121   Fig. 122

In *Untitled (1965)* (Fig. 121), Baron utilises the existing framework of a found box with a hinged lid (a structural strategy she used throughout her career) as a site of containment that protects and secures her ritualistic and prelinguistic 'artefacts'. Assembled from fabric, paper and found objects altered by cryptic imagery and runic inscriptions, Baron constructed her own private world, 'an ideal primitive state, a motherland, with its own language, customs and forms'.[250] In contrast, Joseph

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[249] W Benjamin, *The arcades project*, trans. H Eiland & K McLaughlin, 3rd edn, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 9.

[250] I Schaffner, 'Hannelore Baron', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), *Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art*, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 62.

Cornell creates artwork that uses the homogeneous structure of the box as a miniature museum, collecting his desires and dreams, which are endlessly played out in a 'theatre of the mind'. In *Untitled (Soap Bubble Set) (1936)* (Fig. 122), the structural framework of display creates a space of interaction that is implied by the clear partitions, however, anything other than a conceptual interaction is impossible as the elements remain hermetically sealed. Reminiscent of the strategy of the *Wunderkammer* to create delight and wonder through the juxtaposition of contrasting elements, in Cornell's work it is 'provided by the sudden confrontation of disparate objects' or *trouvailles* (findings).[251] This creates a space of potential in which elements of the work play off each other as if they were actors in a play, with the box as theatre and the frame as a stage.

Fig. 123

Conversely, it is possible to construct subjective narratives within frameworks that are designed to be objective, such as museum displays. This is demonstrated by Fred Wilson's institutional intervention *Mining the Museum (1992)* questioning selection and presentation criteria that cultural institutions use and how this creates a historical understanding that omits the representation of the African American 'Other' by repositioning examples of material production from fine art to items of slavery from the collection of the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, Maryland.[252] Displays, such as *Metalwork* from *Mining the Museum (1992)* (Fig. 123), were designed by Wilson to portray that the society which crafted objects of great beauty

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[251] M A Caws, 'Dreams, inventions and the city', in M A Caws (ed.), *Joseph Cornell's theatre of the mind*, Thames and Hudson, New York, 1993, p. 47.
[252] While this work is not strictly autobiographical, it does speak to Wilson's own position as an African American and the history of his ancestors, which represents an aspect of his identity.

also used this skill to produce objects of torture. However, rather than explicitly stating this with a textual accompaniment, Wilson used the structure of display, and altered traditional museum classifications to convey this idea. Yet based upon a survey handed out at the museum, the audience responded to these displays differently depending upon their gender, race, and social position.[253] What this demonstrates is that the viewer, when presented with a collection of objects and images, constructs a personal interpretation based upon their own personal associations.

Baudrillard's psychoanalytic reading of the collection, ascribes another meaning to the 'unique' object as an autobiographical metonym that is the 'emblem of the series [of a collection]'[254], which often functions as the 'favourite' object that represents the privileged position of the collector as an object within the system of the collection. It can also exist as the absent, missing, unobtainable, or lost object that serves to complete the collection and by which all other items in the collection are qualified. Within artists' collections these relationships are explored and expanded such as Ilya Kabakov's series 'Ten Characters' of which the installations *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away (1985 – 88)* (Fig. 124) and *The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment (1984)* (Fig. 125) are examples, in which Kabakov

Fig. 124   Fig. 125

[253] For a survey of these viewer response sheets see, L G Corrin, 'The audience responds', in L G Corrin (ed.), *Mining the museum: an installation by Fred Wilson*, The Contemporary, Baltimore/ The New Press, New York, NY, 1994, pp. 59 – 76.

[254] Baudrillard, *The system of objects*, 2005, p. 98.

inventories the possessions of a fictional character as a form of biography by proxy of objects and spatial constructions. Through the *theatrum mundi* of the installation, Kabakov literally sets the stage of his fictional character's life. What makes these collections different from the psychoanalytical approach Baudrillard discusses and the types of collections that Messager creates is that Kabakov, rather than creating a collection that constructs and reflects his own identity or position, uses the collection to explore alternative and fictive identities. Kabakov substitutes the typically autobiographical role of the subjective collector with a fictitious character allowing the collection to have its own life that is deciphered by the viewer.

The relic, when placed within the collection serves to create a context in relation to other the other objects collected. Baudrillard established that through these objects, and specifically the favourite object, the collection becomes contextualised by the collector, but also serves to define the collector. However, rather than chronicling their own personalised histories, artists such as Annette Messager, Fred Wilson, and Ilya Kabakov use the collection's subjective nature within their practices to examine ideas of possession and desire, identity and social constructs, and personas. What this establishes is that while artists' collections are subjective, artists are aware of this and examine this within their work, using the collection's structure to construct narratives. Furthermore, due to the object's symbolic function as a relic and the subjective nature of the collection, this narrative has a degree of ambiguity, which requires the viewer's interpretation. This sets a precedent for artists to examine the narrative structure of the collection.

Symbolic function of objects and the narrative metaphor of the collection

As demonstrated above, within artists' collections the object functions as both a souvenir (a personally mediated object of authentic experience) and a relic (a symbolic object of collective significance). The souvenir and the relic both require a narrative to make them a unique object. As demonstrated by Kabakov's installations, this narrative can be fictional, as long as it appropriates the language of authenticity provided by the souvenir/relic – that of tangible 'evidence' of a recordable event. This signification places the object within the dialectics of fact and fiction by

recontextualising the 'factual' object within a 'fictional' account.[255] In this way the object acts as a signifier whose symbolic reading is determined by three things: the situation the artist places it in, namely the collection, which as a visual construct established in the last chapter, operates as an internal architecture that functions in both a material and immaterial way; the collective understanding of the object and its context based upon social, cultural and historical 'memory' and conventions, which establish a pattern of familiarity that determines how narratives are constructed; and the viewer's personal interpretation of an object within the collection based upon the first two points and the viewer's own personal history and position. As a result, the object within an artist's collection has a symbolic function, which artists such as Boltanski, Messager, and Wilson utilise within their work to explore ideas about the individual and the collective, fact and fiction, amnesia and memory.

To this end, the collection provides a space of a personal 're-engagement' with historical and cultural objects. In his model of the 'present becoming future' American anthropologist James Clifford describes how the symbolic *condition* of the object rather than the object's original symbolic function is utilised by individuals in order to reconnect with a lost collective memory and cultural identity of the past.[256] Clifford's acknowledgement of the inherent function of a symbolic object, one that has the potential to be re-inscribed by the owner, is also the very model that artists utilise in archival strategies. Therefore the collection becomes a site where symbolic objects are presented. Stewart elaborates upon this further to discuss how this presentation becomes a narrative with her metaphors of the souvenir and collection. While the souvenir is a partial object that requires a personal narrative of the possessor/owner to complete it, the collection creates a way in which the personal souvenir becomes relatable to others through a narrative of luck.[257] This narrative of luck, played out within the simultaneity of the collection presents the material world as a field of interrelation in which new object relationships stand in for social relationships.

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[255] Here the idea of a factual object is based upon the object's physicality as evidence of its making.
[256] Clifford's article specifically relates to how indigenous cultures when reintroduced to their own historical artefacts whose meanings have been lost, create new ceremonial properties and traditions for the objects that serve to reinvest the symbolic properties of the object defined in terms of the present need. See, J Clifford, 'On collecting art and culture', in S During (ed.), *The cultural studies reader*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, pp. 57 – 76.
[257] Stewart, *On longing*, op. cit., p. 137 & p. 165.

Stewart also acknowledges that the collection, as a microcosm of the world (as an inherent condition of the collection first presented by the *Wunderkammer*), disrupts the chronology of lived time by presenting all artefacts simultaneously, thereby constructing a fiction of the world.[258] In *The System of Objects (1968)*, Baudrillard establishes that objects placed within the serial game of the collection exist outside of lived time through their recontextualisation by the collection, which replaces a historical linear chronology with a systematic dimension in the temporality of the collection.[259] Clifford further establishes that 'collecting – at least in the West, where time is generally thought to be linear and irreversible – implies a rescue of phenomena from inevitable historical decay or loss'.[260] In this sense, the objects collected are saved 'out of time' in a system of suspended animation or no time that inherently reflects a certain temporal and historical position, which contextualises selected objects by their value at the time of inclusion into the collection.[261] The anachronism inherent in the collection is thus important in understanding how artists construct narratives.

The structure of the collection ruins a coherent narrative by placing objects within an anachronistic temporality. This is demonstrated in practices such as American artist Barbara Bloom's *The Collections of Barbara Bloom (2008)*. Bloom relies upon the ambiguity that the heterogeneity of her installation produces in order to conflate 'her own history, her past and present, undermining any linear reading of her artistic production'.[262] Bloom intentionally disrupted the chronology of her life (represented by things) in much the same way that estate sales categorise objects according to lot number without regard to organising objects based on an individual's timeline in a linear way as a museum would. Furthermore, the mnemonic and metonymic function of the object lies not in an individual's memory of a specific object but of the viewer's memory of a similar object within their life. As Godfrey states,

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[258] ibid., p. 162.
[259] Baudrillard, op. cit., pp. 96 – 97.
[260] J Clifford, 'On collecting art and culture', in S During (ed.), *The cultural studies reader*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, p. 67.
[261] ibid. This no-time of the collection reflects Foster's archival no-place. Foster, 'An archival impulse', op. cit., p. 22.
[262] J Dalton, 'Dream trash/trash dream: the artist as collector, historian and archivist', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 21, no. 2, May 1999, p. 67.

Found photographs emerge as magical in their appearance and in their fate, as superstitious, as charming, as democratic, because they are cherished like precious objects. Layered with time, they trigger memories not of the people they show, but from the people who look at them.[263]

By engaging with objects and archives of material culture, artists ensure a certain legibility and familiarity that can be 'disturbed or *detourné*'[264], which is achieved through the collection. This results in the use of symbolic objects that require the interpretation of the viewer to translate the ambiguous narratives artists construct. In discussing this narrative function of artistic collections, Foster states that 'artists are often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects – in art and history alike – that might offer points of departure again'.[265] By utilising the temporality of the collection as a tool of narrative subversion, Boktanski, Messager, Kabakov, and Dean are able to propose alternative historical readings. This is especially evident through the *disrupted* chronology of their collections, mirrored in the fragmented nature of their collected objects and the ambiguity of their narratives (as opposed to the linearity of historical narratives).

To this end, an engagement with both personal and collective histories is integral to contemporary artists working with collecting methodologies. It is through the collection that these narratives are expressed. Foster states that the archival impulse demonstrated by contemporary artists within their work rely on the synthesis between text and objects/images to convey a narrative that makes 'historical information often lost or displaced, physically present'.[266] Furthermore, Foster recognises that these narratives do not resemble authoritative metanarratives of 'History'; instead, they engage with the ambiguities between subjectivity and objectivity, fact and fiction, and the individual and the collective.[267] To do this, artists disrupt the traditional narrative structure (e.g. linearity, resolution, etc.) by using the collection to arrange 'materials according to a quasi-archival logic, a

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[263] Godfrey, op. cit., p. 119.
[264] Foster, 'An archival impulse', op. cit., p. 4.
[265] ibid., p. 5.
[266] Foster, 'An archival impulse', op. cit., p. 4.
[267] ibid., pp. 3 – 6.

matrix of citation and juxtaposition, and presents them in a quasi-archival architecture, a complex of texts and objects'.[268] In this way, the collection fulfils a very specific function as a narrative structure, the purpose of which is to create open-ended readings that reflect a discourse with the individual viewer.

Significantly, Foster identifies that contemporary artists engage with a 'quasi-archival' architecture and logic in the construction of their work. As demonstrated in the last chapter, this architecture reflects both the material and immaterial structure of artists' collections. Furthermore, it determines how objects, images, and text interrelate when placed within two alternative organisational logics such as the systematic grid or the heterogeneous flatbed. Given that the collection also provides a narrative structure, the next chapter will examine what constitutes a 'quasi-archival' logic and how this assists in the creation of ambiguous narratives by expanding upon the model of the *Wunderkammer* and the systematic collection.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that objects, which include photographs and artefacts, act as mnemonic and metonymic devices that within artists' collections function as signifiers assisting in the construction of narratives. These objects have an important documentary role within artistic performance, with photographs acting as witnesses of events and artefacts serving as props in and traces of performance. As a result, these registers assist in the construction of artistic narratives through an engagement with material culture and the seriality of artistic practice, which acts as a collection. In this function photographs and artefacts are utilised in different but complimentary ways, with photographs having an indexical and direct visual link to experience and the artefact as having a symbolic and physical link to experience. This is significant as it provides a way to examine how both the photograph and artefact have a symbolic function within the interrelation of the collection.

The photograph, when used as a found object as opposed to a document within an artwork exhibits qualities of the souvenir, which as a mnemonic device represents an

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[268] ibid. p. 5.

'incomplete' trace of an event that requires a narrative to complete its function of historicising personal events. It has been shown that artists use the ambiguity of the souvenir, caused by its personal significance, to question the ability of images and objects to preserve memory. It was established that the collection represents a memory crisis in which the relationships between memory and amnesia and order and chaos, create an environment of ambiguity where artists engage with counter-memory and the interpretive nature of collections. This mnemonic function of the object was explored further to identify the artefact's metonymic and symbolic function as a relic. A relic represents an object that shares a collective cultural, historical and social significance mediated by an individual's relationship to the object in such a way that personal experience and interpretation construct personal narratives. To this end artists engage with everyday objects as relics, subverting their vernacular form and conventional relationships through the collection, in order to produce fictions that explore this individual/collective dichotomy.

As a result, it was identified that the ambiguity of the object as a signifier and the system of the collection as a site of interrelation serve to construct narratives. These narratives are constructed by the collector and are therefore subjective and personal. It was established that artists question and utilise this subjectivity, by exploring ways of constructing relationships within their collections in order to present counter-memories and fictitious characters. Artists subvert the temporality of collection and the signifying function of the object to construct new narratives. Central to the authenticity of these narratives is the participation of the viewer in the interpretation of artists' collections, making this visual format a viable structure in which to communicate meaning. What this demonstrates is a renewed interaction with narrative concerns within contemporary art that becomes more than a mere illustrative account that expresses a complete linear trajectory. Through the object's condition of witness, the recording and capturing of process, performance, fictitious characters, anomie, personal experience, destruction, and trace redefines narrative. It is an understanding of this open field of narrative that provides the basis of the collecting strategies artists use within contemporary art that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

***Truth is Stanger than Fiction*: Rendering the familiar unfamiliar as a strategy of discovery**

'We are lost between the abyss within us and the boundless horizons outside us.'[269]

'Curiosity is a new vice that has been stigmatized in turn by Christianity, by philosophy, and even by a certain conception of science. Curiosity, futility. The word however, pleases me. To me it suggests something altogether different: it evokes "concern"; it evokes the care one takes for what exists and could exist; a readiness to find strange and singular what surrounds us; a certain relentlessness to break up our familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things; a fervor to grasp what is happening and what passes; a casualness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential.'[270]

This chapter argues that the roles of narrative, travel and discovery have evolved from their function in the Early Modern period to become redefined by the *Wunderkammer* model by which contemporary artists now engage with issues of curiosity, chance, and wandering. it explores these roles as concerns that shape the artist's collection and then determines how artists construct new narratives through the collection by engaging with association, juxtaposition and proposition to redefine and expand upon the scope of historical archival strategies in order to present the world as ambiguous.

The previous chapter established the mnemonic and metonymic function of the object, which when placed within the collection act as signifiers. These signifiers

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[269] R Smithson, 'A Cinematic Atopia', 1971, p.140, cited in B Fer, op. cit., p. 57.

[270] M Foucault, 'The masked philosopher', in S Lotringer, *Foucault live (interviews, 1961 – 1984)*, trans L Hochroth & J Johnston, Semiotext(e), New York, 1996, p. 305, cited in S Najafi, 'Cut the bean: curiosity and research in the pages of *Cabinet* magazine', in M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008, p. 156.

operate as social, cultural, and historical symbols due to their connection to material culture, however, rather than represent a collective reality, these objects are ascribed an individual symbolic function through the interpretation of the viewer. This chapter will demonstrate how contemporary artists are engaged with the narrative condition of interrelation that the collection creates in order to construct counter memories, propose alternative realities, and investigate associations, and establishes that this occurs through a model of collecting that invites the personal, intuitive, heterochronistic, ambiguous, curious, and fictive into the logical system of the archive; in other words, the antithesis of the type of public, ideological, and systematic collections English museology theorist Susan Pearce posits (nor are these Pearce's private fetish or souvenir collections either). The chapter will refer to contemporary artists such as English artists Keith Tyson and Tacita Dean, American artists Mark Dion and Allen Ruppersberg, and English/American artist Susan Hiller, to show that aspects of the *Wunderkammer* are re-interpreted through its evolution in the early to mid-twentieth century and by subverting the structure of systematic collection to expand upon how discovery, curiosity, and chance construct the narrative aspect of their work.

The section 'The *Wunderkammer* Model' shows that contemporary artists engage in such fashion with aspects of the *Wunderkammer*. It addresses the misperceptions associated with this term and provides a new understanding of this idiom by repositioning the *Wunderkammer* as a model of logic that is based upon French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's definition of sensible intuition. To demonstrate this, the section investigates the artwork of Tyson and Dion, who utilise the conceptual impetus of the cabinet of curiosities in the presentation of work that formally references the *Wunderkammer*. The following section, 'Scientific and intuitive enquiry', argues that an artist's collection is a physical representation of the artist's methodology of inquiry. Furthermore, this methodology is characterised by the synthesis of two approaches to logic: sensible intuition (*Wunderkammer)* and scientific knowledge (systematic). This section determines that Tyson, Dion, and Hiller use both a *Wunderkammer* and a systematic model in the construction of narratives within their collections.

The next section, 'Discovery and the material and textual condition of curiosity', develops the congruities between the artist's collection as a material manifestation of inquiry and the concepts of discovery and curiosity that were integral to the Early Modern cabinet of curiosities by determining four strategies artists use in the construction of their collections: the use of fragments and everyday phenomena, free association, chance, and wandering. The central strategies of chance and wandering are developed further in the following two sections, 'Serendipity – an active search for the chance encounter', which determines how chance is utilised within the practices of Hiller and Dean to investigate the social and material condition of the world, and 'The strategy of wandering', which defines wandering as both a material and immaterial strategy of discovery.

The final section, 'Narratives of ambiguity – the chronotope and delightful incongruities', locates the collection as the site of narrative. It examines how Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg, in particular, construct open-ended, ambiguous narratives by presenting remnants of material culture demonstrating the fragmentary nature of meaning making. Furthermore, it establishes the use of a purely visual language within the practices of Dean and Ruppersberg, representing a way of making the immaterial associations and memories of the viewer material in the work and re-establishes a way of presenting the world as wonder.

The *Wunderkammer* Model

Contemporary theorists and critics have been critical of the use (or misuse) of the term *Wunderkammer* to describe artistic collecting practices as it's generally applied to a specific form of postmodern bricolage installation, for example, Australian Luke Roberts's *Wunderkammer/Kunstkamera (1994 – 95)* (Fig. 126), or exhibitions that have a bricolage aesthetic such as the XLII Venice Biennale's 'Art and Science' *Wunderkammer* pavilion in 1986 and more recently the *Curious Crystal of Unusual Purity* held at PS.1 Contemporary Art Centre in New York in 2004 (Fig. 127). [271] As

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[271] For an example of how this term is used see, Australian curator Beth Jackson's description of Roberts's practice in, B Jackson, 'Wunderkammern: actual and virtual', *Artlink*, vol. 19, no. 1, March 1999, pp. 27 – 30. For critique of this aesthetic see, R White, *Curious crystal of unusual purity P.S. 1*, The Brooklyn Rail, 2005, retrieved 3 November 2011, <http://brooklynrail.org/2004/09/artseen/curious-crystals-of-unusual-purity>.

a maligned term, *Wunderkammer* and its postmodern methodology of 'bricolage' require clarification and redefinition in terms of a model of logic as opposed to a method of construction.

Fig. 126

Fig. 127

The concept of 'bricolage' was developed by Lévi-Strauss to describe the concept of 'sensible intuition', an alternative to but equally important counterpart of scientific logic in practices that 'take to pieces and reconstructs sets of events (on a psychical, socio-historical or technical plane) and use them as so many indestructible pieces for structural patterns in which they serve alternatively as ends or means'.[272] Based on this definition, within art, on a psychical level bricolage represents mythic thought or memory, in a socio-historical context it is in juxtaposition and recontextualisation culminating in Postmodernist pastiche and Post-colonialist hybridity, and as a technique it is associated with the historical avant-garde strategy of 'do-it-yourself' with 'whatever is at hand' seen in Dadaist and Surrealist assemblages and collages of material culture, such as Kurt Schwitters' Merz constructions (1918 – 48) (Fig. 128).

Fig. 128

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[272] C Lévi-Strauss, *The savage mind*, 2nd edn., Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1972, pp. 12 - 33.

What defines bricolage and therefore its use to link the concept of *Wunderkammer* to Postmodern art practice, is its heterogeneous practice of collecting. Any illuminating qualities of the *Wunderkammer* (and to a lesser extent, bricolage) are often marred by cliché as it is employed as a way of validating the indiscriminate use of pastiche and juxtaposition that deliberately ignores context and concept in order disrupt the historical reading of the collection in a way that formally and aesthetically mirrored the spatial logic of the Early Modern cabinet of curiosities. Even writers such as English curator James Putnam, who acknowledges the similarities between the cabinet of curiosities and Twentieth-Century artistic practices, refers to the aesthetic appeal of this form of melange as the '*Wunderkammer* principle' or 'effect'[273], a term that acts as an umbrella for a vast range of artistic practices, without developing a critical and specific application for its use.

While the artworks discussed in this chapter expand upon the model of the *Wunderkammer*, this dissertation does not describe these key works as cabinets of curiosities. The reason for this is that while the model is useful in unpacking the concerns of contemporary artists who use collection as a methodology within their practice, 'cabinet of curiosities' (along with *Wunderkammer*) is a historically specific term. To call contemporary artworks cabinets of curiosities would serve to ignore the conceptual evolution that has occurred within art since the Early Modern period. It is for this reason that it is so important to re-examine the *Wunderkammer's* characteristics and re-define it as a *model* of collecting that conceptually offers a way for contemporary artists to explore the potential of the archival condition as opposed to a purely visual form of presentation.

As an alternative collecting model, the Early Modern cabinet provides a poetic personal strategy of making sense of the world by conflating the subjective and objective, the imaginative and the real, and the natural and artificial into a singular space of interaction – a *theatrum mundi* or theatre of the world. As established in Chapter One, the encyclopaedic cosmology of the *Wunderkammer* relies on the chaotic display of heterogeneous singularities collected from travels to exotic lands and their accompanying narratives of historical provenance, dangerous accrual and

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[273] J Putnam, *Art and artifact: the museum as medium*, 2nd edn, Thames & Hudson, New York, 2009, p. 10.

religious and mythic allegories to create a sense of wonder and curiosity for the viewer. Traditionally, this type of collecting reflected an individual's position in this cosmology (and primarily their possession of it) mediated through an Early Modern belief and knowledge system that dictated a person's relationship with the natural, social, cultural, and theological world.

Within contemporary culture, these systems have evolved due to a myriad of philosophical, scientific, socio-economic, cultural, and political developments and as a result these advancements have created several areas of opportunity that allow artists to wander, discover, and collect in much the same way as was done by the *Wunderkammer's curieux*. These areas are: the collapsing of distance within the world through cyber-reality, for example the internet; the physical breakdown of borders and boundaries which allow people more freedom to wander and travel, for example, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the creation of the European Union in 1993; and the technological advancements in and availability of transportation which makes it easier to physically access other places, all of which contribute to the dissemination of knowledge. Through such advancements, two artists who are seminal in using the formal qualities of the *Wunderkammer* as a way to explore and critique the conceptual intentions behind collective systems of knowledge are Keith Tyson and Mark Dion.[274] The model of the *Wunderkammer* provides a site of inter-relation and subjectivity that Tyson and Dion use to construct a 'theatre of inquiry about the world', where the viewer participates in the discovery of the work through relational, philosophical, and poetic enquiries.

Tyson's symbolic and cosmological project, *Large Field Array (2006)* (Fig. 129) is an installation of 300 roughly cubic sculptures that create a diagrammatic model of the world through the physical relationships between objects and serve as metonymic and metaphorical markers of different systems of logic. Like the Early Modern *curieux*, the motivation of the work is curiosity[275], but rather than finding singularities, Tyson constructs them based upon an interdisciplinary and rigorous

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[274] Lisa Corrin discusses the relationships between the formal visuality of Dion's work and the model of the *Wunderkammer* in L G Corrin, 'Mark Dion's project: a natural history of wonder and a wonderful history of nature', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & M Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p.52.
[275] F A Krag & T Ribe, *Interview: Keith Tyson*, Keith Tyson, 2006, retrieved 22 December 2009, <http://www.keithtyson.com/#/projects/largefieldarray/writings/>.

approach to research. Each sculpture exists as its own metaphorical system often relying on visual punning and improbability such as an elephant made of mice (Fig. 130), which is then placed within the system of the cabinet amplifying the work's relational complexities.

Fig. 129

Fig. 130

The sculptural installation of *Large Field Array (2006)* relies upon the seriality of the grid as a formal structure of organisation within the 'cabinet' of the gallery's architecture to create a non-hierarchical field that can be approached from a myriad of ways. Each column and row represents a different theme that is explored allegorically to express ideas and associations about culture, metaphysics, science, and politics, reflecting the complex belief structures that mediate humanity's engagement with the world. The collapsing of these areas into a symbolic and physical space of inter-relation references the microcosm of the *Wunderkammer*, where Tyson's sculptures are strategically positioned to juxtapose the physical attributes and metaphorical meanings of the objects in this universe to expose the overwhelming and terrifying interconnectedness between everything and the information overload that this brings to the viewer.[276] As a 'theatre of the world', Tyson uses scale to place the viewer within this system of interconnectedness. Their navigation of this space creates a unique personalised meaning of the work, based upon the viewer's physical location in the installation, but also due to his/her cultural, historical, and social background.

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[276] K Tyson & D van den Boogerd, *The Wu Way*, Keith Tyson, 2006, retrieved 22 December 2009, <http://www.keithtyson.com/#/projects/largefieldarray/writings/>.

Where Keith Tyson's collection explores what it means to understand and 'be' in the world, Mark Dion's subjective taxonomies question how the role of specialisation affects the ability of the museum to represent encyclopaedic knowledge and critiques the ethics and neutrality of classification systems within institutional collections. Dion investigates this 'obsessive will-to-order' by foregrounding 'the interface between nature and the history of the disciplines and discourses that take nature as their object of knowledge' through a subversive parody of these systems.[277] The work *Tate Thames Dig (1999)* (Fig. 131) and (Fig. 132), is an example of how Dion conflates the two systems of scientific thought Lévi-Strauss defines, one of 'sensible intuition' and the other of logical classification[278], into the space of a double-sided cabinet that visually (and physically) represents both models in the form of the pre-Enlightenment and nineteenth century souvenir collections.[279]

Fig. 131

Fig. 132

Central to this work is the importance of the performative aspects of these two systems of thought, which demystify the physical process of 'museumification'. Dion embeds the action of his excavation of the Thames River in London within the repository of this collection by means of a public 'theatre', which shares similarities with the Renaissance view of the microcosm of the cabinet as being the theatre of the world, in which Dion and his team present the mechanism of archaeology by playing

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[277] N Bryson, 'Mark Dion and the birds of Antwerp', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & Miwon Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p. 96.
[278] Lévi-Strauss, op. cit., p. 15.
[279] L G Corrin, 'Mark Dion's project: a natural history of wonder and a wonderful history of nature', op. cit., p.74.

the various roles of specialists throughout the process, inviting viewers to question ideas about 'archaeology, scientific classification, relationships and knowledge of the past'.[280]

The cabinet that the Tate London presents as the reliquary of Dion's excavation, conservation, and classification of found objects from the banks of the Thames in *Tate Thames Dig (1999)* does not remain a static and didactic repository. In keeping with Dion's aim to critique systems of knowledge and his interest in wonder and discovery, the cabinet is designed to be touched, opened and explored by the public, filling a space and function that art rarely gets to occupy in the 'look but don't touch' conservation of the museum. For Dion the *Wunderkammer* presents a 'discursive space where dialogue prompts an infinite series of discoveries' and where the viewer is free to make choices and interact with the work 'by opening the drawers, examining the contents and making "choices outside the narrative structure of the museum"'.[281] They are encouraged to become 'lost' in the act of discovery, engaging with the collection to map new spaces of enquiry.

While both artists could easily be seen as indicative of Putnam's '*Wunderkammer* effect' (Dion goes so far as to title some of his works *Wunderkammer*), what separates their practices from the clichéd use of *Wunderkammer* described above is their use of the conceptual *and* formal strategies that the *Wunderkammer* affords as a *model* of logic. Rather than relying on spatial heterogeneity and a lack of hierarchy as a dominant formal aesthetic, Tyson and Dean apply methodological and conceptual aspects of the cabinet of curiosities to systematic models; for example, Tyson's use of fabrication rather than bricolage in the construction of his sculptures and his use of the grid to spatially organise metaphorical relationships and Dion's synthesis of two systems of scientific thought represented by the taxonomical Natural History museum of the Enlightenment and the encyclopaedic cosmology of

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[280] The Warhol: resources and lessons, *Artists who collect: Mark Dion*, The Andy Warhol Museum, 2006, retrieved 21 June 2010, <http://edu.warhol.org/app_dion.html>.

[281] Exerpt from an unpublished interview between Mark Dion and Stephan Dillemuth at the conclusion of their project, *A Tale of Two Seas: An Account of Stephan Dillemuth's and Mark Dion's Journey Along the Shores of North Sea and Baltic Sea and What They Found There,* cited in L G Corrin, 'Mark Dion's project: a natural history of wonder and a wonderful history of nature', op. cit, p.79.

the cabinet of curiosities as a way to critique the distance and lack of wonder that logic creates in the contemporary society's view of nature.

While visually illustrative of the *Wunderkammer* model, Dion's and Tyson's practices are indicative of a particular impetus in contemporary art by artists who use collecting within their work, one of 'restoring *a lack of* order' to what German art-historian Walter Grasskamp describes as the 'excessive sobriety and pedantry of the scientific form' as a way of 'not only establish[ing] connections but also challeng[ing] them' especially through the inclusion of arbitrary play.[282] While Grasskamp's examples tend to focus on institutional forms of critique, American theorist Hal Foster discusses contemporary artists using what he describes as an 'archival impulse', stating that 'the museum has been ruined as a coherent system' and in response to this artists are responding to 'other kinds of ordering – within the museum and without'.[283] Specifically these artists 'often arrange [their] materials according to a quasi-archival logic, a matrix of citation and juxtaposition and presents them in a quasi-archival architecture, a complex of texts and objects'.[284] In this way artists engage with the alternative collecting model of the *Wunderkammer*, which represents a formal and importantly a conceptual juxtaposition, heterogeneity, lack of hierarchy, curiosity, idiosyncrasy, and heterochrony. This is done in order to disrupt the narrative function of the institutional archive and the absolutism it represents in favour of open-ended quasi narratives that engage with the slippage between fact and fiction.

Scientific and intuitive enquiry

What do collections allow the artist to do? To start with, a collection requires a collector to select, acquire, and arrange objects within a system. Mieke Bal considers the collector as a 'narrative agent', developing and organising the collection as a plot.[285] During the Early Modern period this was the *curieux*, those collectors of curiosities who created the *Wunderkammer* as a reflection of their own personal

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[282] W Grasskamp, 'Artists and other collectors', in A A Bronson & P Gale (eds), *Museums by Artists*, trans. P Marsden, Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada, 1983, p. 143.

[283] H Foster, 'An archival impulse', *October*, vol. 110, Autumn 2004, p. 5.

[284] ibid.

[285] M Bal, 'Telling objects: A narrative perspective on collecting' in J Elsner & R Cardinal (eds), *The cultures of collecting*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1994, p. 112.

cosmology. Artists who use a collecting methodology to construct their work are no different: their artworks are constructed to convey meaning, a form of narrative in itself, but their collections, which constitute their artworks, differ from other forms of personal collections (which have a private function). This is due to the fact that while they are representative of a form of private and personal endeavour they are ultimately placed within the public sphere through a cultural and economic exchange that sees them acquired into the collections of others – private individuals, corporate shareholders and public institutions.

Artists' collections function as both a personal motivation to make sense of the world that proposes a particular point of view, but these collections are also a form of exchange in which the proposition that the artist constructs is shared with others. What this implies is that for all artistic collections there is some formal resolution or completion that allows them to be exhibited, even in works that exist as ongoing series, such as Cindy Sherman's *Film Stills (1977 – 80)*, Gerhard Richter's *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* and Marcel Broodthaers's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles (1968 – 72)*. This resolution functions as both an imaginary and contingent ending, to use Bal's terms.[286] It is imaginary in the sense that it signals a subjective, cognitive closure and contingent in the sense that it reflects an external, temporal event – in this case an exhibition. Paradoxically, this completion does not signify the metaphorical death of the collector as Baudrillard posits.[287] Instead, the imaginary and contingent completion of an artist's collection as an artwork becomes part of a greater impetus that is at the heart of artistic practice, its use as both a material and conceptual expression and as a reflective object of knowledge that within their expanded oeuvre signifies an epistemological collection. The artist as a collector continues to create new work, perhaps expanding upon the same thread, approaching it from a different angle and even repeating it, not to mention starting an entirely new investigation, as this constitutes the methodology of inquiry for their research.[288]

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[286] ibid., p. 113.

[287] J Baudrillard, *The system of objects*, trans. J Benedict, 2nd edn, Verso, London, 2005, p. 99.

[288] For an insightful investigation of how artistic inquiry relies upon the necessity of interpretive incompleteness within artwork and the condition of a generative 'epistemological unknown' within artists' practice-led research, see D Mafé, Rephrasing voice: art, practice-led research and the limits and sites of articulacy, PhD Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2009.

At the heart of a physical collection lies a critical and methodological way of working that is in itself a collection, the site of which rather than being external, lies within the artist. This internalised collection is both encyclopaedic and intangible in nature because it encompasses the memory of all past works and the (as yet) unrealised potentials of new work, not to mention all the integral and intangible resources that are available for the artist to use to construct their work, for example, language, culture, history, science, mathematics, imagination, myth, and fantasy. In this way artists never take a wholly logical nor do they adopt a wholly intuitive position when it comes to creating an artwork; they do not compartmentalise the way they think about the concepts and materials they are working with but instead these mutually inform one another within the making of the work.

Every artwork is the result of a collection of approaches, senses, and logics that exist simultaneously within different registers. Lévi-Strauss acknowledges that 'art lies half-way between scientific knowledge and mythical or magical thought' as the artist is 'both something of a scientist and of a "bricoleur"' in that the artist makes 'a material object which is also an object of knowledge'.[289] This dichotomy is indicative of two inverse approaches (both physical and mental processes) that many artists oscillate between in the creation of artwork – one is the use of a concept to construct a new object or event, for example the use of instructions to create American conceptual artist Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawing #1085: Drawing Series-Composite, Part I-IV, # 1- 24, A+B*, detail, Dia Art Foundation, Beacon, New York, *(1968/2003)* (Fig. 133), as a model of 'scientific logic' and the other is the use of objects or events to construct a meaning, as a model of 'sensible intuition', for example, the use of an intuitive and relational combination of everyday objects in Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco's *Cats and Watermelons (1992)* (Fig. 134). An artwork then becomes both a means and an ends in problem solving and, through these methods of production, assists in the creation of new knowledge via artistic discovery. Furthermore, this discovery also extends to the viewer through the 'open-endedness' of an artwork's visual language, requiring the viewer's participation in the interpretation of meaning.

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[289] Lévi-Strauss, op. cit., p. 22.
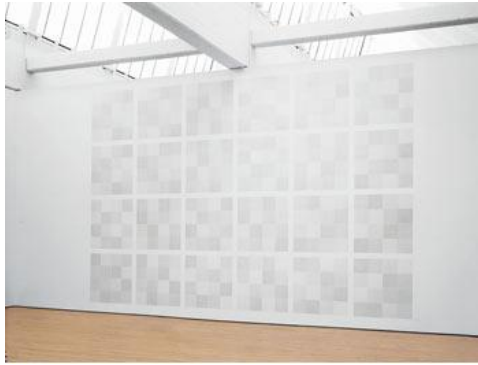
Fig. 133

Fig. 134

These two registers of 'scientific logic' and 'sensible intuition' can also be applied to the collection. A collection that uses a scientific logic is best demonstrated by a systematic or institutional collection. The foundation of a museum's collection is an ideology that is upheld by the specific selection of its collected objects (evolution, art history, etc.). In order to do this, an object selected represents a standardised but *ideal* specimen that is the most 'normalised' example of its type. If unusual specimens are included it is to show their deviation from this norm, thereby upholding the normative paradigm. On the other hand, a *Wunderkammer* collection would best exemplify the logic of bricolage. Its collection is heterogeneous rather than typological and objects collected are chosen for their unusual deviations from the norm (which in this case functions as the mundane or everyday). Specifically, the objects collected in an Early Modern *Wunderkammer* demonstrate the undefinable and infinite qualities of 'God' as evidenced through the diversity of 'His' creation. Conversely, collected objects act as the starting point by which to define the concept through the system of the collection, with each addition changing its meaning as opposed to upholding it.

In both cases the collection acts as the system that mediates between concept or meaning and objects or events. Therefore it is not a huge leap to surmise that as a collector, an artist, who uses both scientific logic and sensible intuition in the construction of their artwork, creates a collection that exemplifies both models. Where Tyson's *Large Field Array (2006)* and Dion's *Tate Thames Dig (1999)* serve as formally obvious examples of the type of synthesis between systematic and intuitive models of thought and collections, with Tyson representing a more intuitive and Dion a more systematic presentation of objects, the collections of Susan Hiller,

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Tacita Dean, and Allen Ruppersberg reflect a constant oscillation between objectivity and subjectivity, knowledge and intuition within their work. Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg use conceptual and intuitive parameters in constructing their work that removes artistic idiosyncrasies and is therefore more aligned with scientific methods. However, the subject matter of these works renders unique the trivial, repressed, clichéd, overlooked, and boring, into the types of singularities collected within the *Wunderkammer*, in order to expose the wonder inherent in the world. This represents a model that is less about the discovery of knowledge than it is about the discovery of poetics that transforms the everyday into the strange and marvellous.

Like Tyson and Dion who create work that investigates the conflation between rational and metaphorical views of the world, Susan Hiller investigates the tension between what is considered scientific knowledge – that is, rational, objective, distant, critical (which stems from her background as an anthropologist) – and what is considered intuitive knowledge – irrational, imaginative, mysterious, subjective, and numinous (which stems from being in the world and feeling or experiencing it). At the heart of Hiller's practice is a concern with expressing the 'synthesis between ideology and poetry'[290], or what she describes as the 'paraconceptual'.[291] This synthesis occurs through the investigation of the emotive, expressive, symbolic and associative qualities of cultural artefacts:

> There is something elusive, uncanny, fascinating beneath the surface of what at first seems easy to understand or ordinary or banal. I like to work with materials that have been culturally repressed or misunderstood, what's been relegated to the lunatic fringe or what's so boring we can't even look at it anymore. Postcards and dreams, séances and systems of classification, the

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[290] S Hiller, 'Editor's foreword', in S Hiller (ed.), *The myth of Primitivism: perspectives on art*, Routledge, London, 1991, pp. 1 – 2, cited in A M Kokoli, 'Introduction', in A M Kokoli (ed.), *Susan Hiller - the provisional texture of reality: selected talks and texts, 1977 – 2007*, JRP| Ringier, Zurich & Les Presses du reel, Dijon, 2008, p. 12.

[291] English art theorist Alexandra Kokoli argues that Hiller's paraconceptual oeuvre, represents an in between space, 'just sideways of conceptualism and neighbouring the paranormal, a devalued site of culture where women and the feminine have been conversely privileged…neither conceptualism nor the paranormal are left intact: as in the case of the abject, the prefix "para-" symbolizes the force of contamination through a proximity so great that it threatens the soundness of all boundaries'. See, A M Kokoli, *Susan Hiller's paraconceptualism*, 2006, OpenAIR@RGU [online], retrieved 26 August 2011,
<http://rgu.academia.edu/AlexandraKokoli/Papers/389622/Susan_Hillers_Paraconceptualism>.

human aura and a box of desert fossils, automatic writings and bedroom wallpapers, trance states and clips from Hollywood movies, collections of intangible things like shadows and collections of tangible things like toy plastic animals – all these items are artefacts of our culture that I've worked with.[292]

Rather than objectively positioning these artefacts in a system of knowledge that contextualises them historically or scientifically, Hiller looks for personal associations that are embedded in these artefacts, a process she calls, 'working through objects'.[293]

An example of this is *From the Freud Museum (1991 – 97)* (Fig. 135), which originally began as a site-specific installation within the Freud Museum, London. This work consists of the type of neutral boxes that anthropologists use to store artefacts, in which Hiller placed her own 'artefacts', objects that have little cultural value but hold intrinsic resonance. To this, Hiller added contextualising material – representations (images, maps and documents) and text (titles). So each box functions as a collection of different registers (object, image, text) that relate to each other in order to define a subject in a way that is reminiscent of American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs (1965)* (Fig. 136). However, where Kosuth uses object, image and text to present a conceptual understanding of a chair

Fig. 135   Fig. 136

[292] S Hiller, 'The provisional texture of reality (on Andrei Tarkovsky) [1999]', in A M Kokoli (ed.), *Susan Hiller - the provisional texture of reality: selected talks and texts, 1977 – 2007*, JRP| Ringier, Zurich & Les Presses du reel, Dijon, 2008, p. 27.
[293] S Hiller, 'Working through objects (1994)', in C Merewether (ed.), *The archive: documents of contemporary art*, Whitechapel, London & The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006, pp. 45 – 48.

through societal forms of representation, Hiller uses these registers to determine boundaries in which the slippery condition of free association and interrelation exists as the material of the work, a visual 'Freudian slip'.

The parallels between Hiller's methodology and Freud's investigation into the unconscious (as well as his own collecting urge) are deliberate. Like the Surrealists who were influenced by psychoanalysis, Hiller explores the artistic potential that the narrative of the unconscious creates, not only her own, but also the collective unconscious, that of the particular historical, cultural and societal position of the viewer. Hiller's collection provides a site of narrative, that through the collected items define the boundaries by which the story is told.[294] This story, which is non-linear, is more akin to poetry as it is evocative, without resolution, and requires interpretation. For Hiller there are always two possible narratives at play,

> one is the story that the narrator, in this case the artist, thinks she's telling – the story-teller's story – and the other is the story that the listener is understanding, or hearing, or imagining on the basis of the same objects.[295]

Narrative in Hiller's collection becomes one of contingency that requires the viewer to interpret the way the elements of the work interact, in a similar way to how Hiller did when the work was constructed, as an interface 'between the social/cultural world and the individual's subjectivity, formed by [his or] her experiences in that world'.[296] *Cowgirl,* one of the boxes in *From the Freud Museum (1991 – 97)* (Fig. 137) demonstrates how this interface functions within the space of the collection. The starting point for this associative narrative is a pair of white cow-shaped milk jugs or creamers (as the former is called in England and the latter is called in the United States). This is where the linguistic slippages begin to occur, not only in the vernacular differences between two English-speaking countries but also how words are repurposed within language (both 'jugs' and 'creamers' are slang for breasts). These milk jugs are juxtaposed with a photograph of American outlaw Jennie

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[294] ibid., p. 42.
[295] ibid.
[296] Hiller, 'The provisional texture of reality (on Andrei Tarkovsky) [1999]', op. cit., p. 28. Hiller sees herself in a privileged position to observe this interface due to being a foreigner (as a expatriate American living in England) and a woman, a position that oscillates between being inside and outside cultural/societal conventions. See, Kokoli, 'Introduction', op. cit., p. 11.

Metcalf, who as a *female* outlaw is already outside of the conventional and domesticated sphere of women that the milk jugs convey; moreover she is holding a large pistol that is reminiscent of a phallus and the punning that this creates (especially in the context of the Freud Museum) further emphasises the slippage not only of language but of the way culture/society constructs gender identity. Lastly, Hiller contextualises the work by the title of '*Cowgirl*', which both describes an archetype of the American Wild West and also parodies the English, gendered insult, 'cow'.

Fig. 137

Each box, as a collection, functions in this associative manner, and when exhibited as a whole, work together ambiguously to define and expand upon a cultural/societal system of knowledge. These boxes expose the slippage of meaning that occurs between association and language, between the position of the artist and the viewer through a poetic and intuitive use of collected elements framed scientifically by an archaeological system in order to interrogate the very systems that create social and cultural conditions. Through her use of both scientific knowledge and sensible intuition within her work, Hiller seeks answers to what it means to be a *subject* in the world? Furthermore, as an artist, what information can be gained and transmitted through an artwork, a physical and *visual* form of communication? Through her collections, Hiller constructs a way to enquire about her position as a foreigner, a woman and above all an artist that doesn't seek to remove her from the fabric of this social and cultural contingency and doesn't estrange the viewer from the very questions she proposes. It is the studio methodology of collecting and the use of

material culture within her work that allows Hiller to examine these questions. The collection provides Hiller with a theatre or microcosm in which to 'play' out her enquiries.

Discovery and the material and textual condition of curiosity

Given that artists such as Tyson, Dion, and Hiller seek to open up a dialogue with their audience to explore the social and cultural constructs that mediate an individual's relationship with the world, what motivates an enquiry into alternative forms of logic? To return to the model of the *Wunderkammer*, curiosity was a crucial motivation into its function as an enquiry about the world, if not harder to define than Pearce's motivations of prestige, domination, aesthetics, risk or leisure that could easily be levelled at the Early Modern *curieux*. So what does it mean to be curious? Apart from allegorical fables such as Pandora's Box or Eve and moralising childhood sayings such as 'curiosity killed the cat' that served to contextualise curiosity as a dangerous temptation, what does curiosity contribute to enquiry, specifically artistic enquiry? To begin, curiosity always asks questions, regardless of whether or not the questions should be asked, motivating the individual asking the questions to look outside his/her sphere of knowledge in order to discover something new. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume II: The Use of Pleasure (1985)*, Foucault describes the motivation of curiosity:

> Not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself. After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself [or herself].[297]

For Foucault, curiosity is a drive that pushes the boundaries of what is known in order to approach (and thus contribute to) knowledge from what is unknown; simply put curiosity produces a type of knowledge that does not exist for its own sake but to constantly shift the knower's paradigm.

[297] M Foucault, *The use of pleasure: the history of sexuality*, trans R Hurley, Penguin Books, London, 1985, p. 2:8, cited in S Najafi, op. cit., p. 156.

Increasingly knowledge production is recognised as a heterogeneous (rather than hierarchical) field that displays inter-reflexivity between the approaches used by different disciplines.[298] Dutch art theorist Kitty Zijlmans acknowledges that within artistic practice assessing and understanding the world involves, 'cognitive, pragmatic, empiricist, sensory, emotive, associative, intuitive ways, through serendipity, theories of knowledge and strategies of research' that allow ambiguity.[299] Such diverse forms of knowledge production see the artist as a researcher, not in the traditional sense but within this heterogeneous field utilising all possible modes of enquiry.

Dutch art theorist Janneke Wessling posits that this artist-as-researcher represents a shift in the 'conception of 'artistry'' in which the artist is no longer a solitary figure of autonomy but instead pursues discursive participation.[300] While Wessling argues for an understanding of artistic research, embodied through artwork, within the university post-graduate setting as opposed to an art historical setting, her assertion speaks to the current post-Barthesean discourse on the role of the artist after the death of the author by recognising the importance of both the artist and the viewer in the construction of meaning within an artwork. What is especially relevant about Wessling's position is her recognition that an artwork offers no solutions, but instead is the 'materialisation of thinking' that requires both the artist's and the viewer's engagement in that thought process; as a result 'knowledge' or 'evidence', as defined by exact science, does not adequately define the meaning making that artists engage with.[301] Instead, the 'knowing' that an artist engages with is not one of objective truth demonstrated by the world, but one of a subjective discovery through an

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[298] This concern is not limited to just art theory in texts such as M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008 and J Wesseling (ed.), *See it again, say it again: the artist as researcher*, Antennae, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2011, but is also approached in social theory such as M Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language*, trans. A M Sheridan Smith, Vintage Books, New York, 1972, and science in texts such as, J V Pickstone, *Ways of knowing: a new history of science, technology and medicine*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000 and M Kemp, *Visualizations: the nature book of art and science*, The University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 2000.

[299] K Zijlmans, 'The idiosyncrasies of artistic research', in J Wesseling (ed.)*, See it again, say it again: the artist as researcher*, Antennae, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2011, pp. 188 – 189.

[300] J Wessling, 'Introduction' in J Wesseling (ed.), *See it again, say it again: the artist as researcher*, Antennae, Valiz, Amsterdam, 2011, p. 4

[301] ibid, pp. 11 – 12.

'interven[tion] in the world'.[302] Wessling uses English artist Simon Starling and his work *Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No. 2)(2005)* (Fig. 138), which converted a site-specific shed into a boat that sailed down the Rhine and then was reconstructed back into its original form within the gallery space, as an example of this materialisation of thinking, as Starling's practice engages with the processes of metamorphosis in the material world.

Fig. 138

When discussing this materialisation of thinking, it is useful to return to this idea of curiosity and how it demonstrated a 'passion of enquiry'[303] that was displayed by the Early Modern *curieux*, an individual who was curious about the *world* and sought to archive their experience with the world visually and textually. Due to the heterogeneous rather than focussed scope of his inquiry, the *curieux* was viewed as a dilettante by his Enlightenment antecedents. Even today, excessive curiosity is seen as an inability to focus, a form of *flânerie* that avoids deep critical inquiry.[304] However, American curator and editor of *Cabinet* magazine, Sina Najafi redefines curiosity as an 'ethical relationship toward the world, a state of mind that allows the

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[302] J V Pickstone, *Ways of knowing: a new history of science, technology and medicine,* Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, p. 17, cited in Zijlmans, op. cit., p. 184.

[303] A Marr, 'Introduction', in R J W Evans & A Marr (eds), *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot, England & Burlington, VT, 2006, p. 15

[304] Ironically, Mark Dion and Allen Ruppersburg, two artists whose oeuvres have exhibited a consistent, continual and critical inquiry (worthy of being called 'deep') embrace the maligned aspect of these terms with Dion identifying with the dilettante and Ruppersberg identifying with the flâneur. See M Kwon, 'Interview: Miwon Kwon in conversation with Mark Dion', in N Bryson, LG Corrin, M Dion & M Kwon (eds), *Mark Dion*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1997, p. 29 and D Levine, *Allen Ruppersberg*, Journal of Contemporary Art, 1992, retrieved 12 August 2011, <http://jca-online.com/ruppersberg.html>.

world-as-wonder not just to be seen but also to be cared for and about' rather than merely be a 'symptom of an apathetic attitude towards the world' which views it as an 'equivalent series of phenomena' taking only a 'short-term interest in one subject before moving on to another'.[305] In this way, curiosity exists not just as a superficial engagement with the world as a spectacle of curiosity or even a condition of the imagination separate from the world; instead, the 'world-as-wonder' becomes a site of mental and corporeal discovery.

As a model of the world, the collection in the Early Modern period embodied this world-as-wonder, creating a collection-as-wonder, a site of curiosity. While the encyclopaedic impetus of such collections is no longer the singular focus of heterogeneous collecting, creating a site of curiosity is. This curiosity, through the collection becomes an intrinsic function of Tyson's, Dion's, and Hiller's artworks creating a discursive and open-ended intervention into the social/cultural and natural world as a way of reigniting a passion for enquiry. As Foucault states, this form of curiosity 'evokes the care one takes for what exists and could exist; a readiness to find strange and singular what surrounds us; a certain relentlessness to break up our familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things; a fervor to grasp what is happening and what passes; a casualness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential'.[306] In other words, by presenting possibilities that engage with the familiar in new ways through an archival structure, these artists provide ways of discovering, or re-discovering, aspects of the world that are overlooked or accepted as givens, when in reality these givens are actually social/cultural constructs. Through the material that these artists work with, objects, images, texts, space (time, information, media, history, and the list goes on), the collection becomes a site where existing givens can be repositioned and recontextualised by associative ramifications which destabilise traditional meanings. Martha Rosler states that artistic 'collecting is discovery'.[307] However, while collecting in and of itself does not produce the sort of curious discovery that these artists are engaged with. Susan Hiller, Tacita Dean, and Allen Ruppersberg all use

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[305] S Najafi, 'Cut the bean: curiosity and research in the pages of *Cabinet* magazine', in M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008, pp. 140 – 141.
[306] M Foucault, 'The masked philosopher', loc. cit.
[307] Personal email correspondence with Martha Rosler, 2011. Used with permission.

the narrative structure of the collection as a way to create the condition of curious ambiguity that fosters the viewer's participation in the construction of meaning and the narrative aspect within the artwork.

Apart from the organisational logic of these artists' archives, which as identified earlier is both systematic and intuitive in its construction, artists employ specific strategies that go hand in hand with a collecting methodology in order to explore the condition of the world-as-wonder and to present the ambiguous narratives that this enquiry engenders. Najafi states that within the narrative structure of *Cabinet* magazine (initiated in 2000) (which in itself is a heterogeneous collection of texts designed to incite curiosity within the reader) these strategies are the use of leftovers and everyday phenomena, free association, chance and meandering (wandering).[308] However, the artists discussed within this dissertation also employ these strategies. To recap briefly, the last chapter discussed the types of things artists collect, most notably fragments ('leftovers' as Najafi calls them) found within the natural and man-made world, or *objet trouvailles*. Parallels could be drawn here with what Lacan refers to as a 'leftover':

> the psychic equivalent of the economic notion of surplus, that aspect of production that doesn't sell and is therefore commercially condemned. Considered redundant and therefore discardable and second-rate, surplus is often remaindered below cost, when not simply destroyed in a sort of cultural foreclosure.[309]

Artists such as American artist Andy Warhol, German artist Karsten Bott and Susan Hiller collect trivial or marginal things, refuse and ephemera; objects that are ordinary and mundane, to specifically disrupt traditional forms of collecting. By doing so, these artists insert the strange, the arbitrary, the curious into archival structures, which fractures the familiar and renders it unusual.

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[308] Najafi, op. cit., pp. 144 – 149.
[309] C Olalquiaga, 'The researcher as a collector of failed goods', in M A Holly & M Smith (eds), *What is research in the visual arts? Obsession, archive, encounter*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, 2008, pp. 38 – 39.

Accompanying these tangible objects, which in any context other than an artwork appear unexceptional, artists also work with everyday phenomena, again to render mysterious what is, as Hiller describes it above, ordinary, banal, and boring. These phenomena, which dictate social/cultural customs, hierarchies, and daily necessities, tasks and habits, are embedded within the objects made by material production. The intrinsic quality of objects is more than just their use value or function; it is also dictated by their aesthetic design and novelty. For example, Hiller's visual punning in *Cowgirl, From the Freud Museum, (1991 – 97)* would not be possible without the existence of white cow-shaped creamers, nor would curiosity exist as material in the work, as to why such a curiously designed object was made in the first place, given the potential innuendos and associations it could cause.

The visual punning in Hiller's work is indicative of the next strategy Najafi identified: free association. As stated in Chapter One, this is a strategy of disruption that was employed by the Dadaists as a way to shatter socio/political constructs and by the Surrealists to mine the unconscious, through both linguistic and visual play, such as the exquisite corpse and collage. In both spheres, free association functions as a way of inviting poetic, heterogeneous and non-linear juxtapositions into the everyday, creating unexpected and curious situations. This is where free association and collection intrinsically work together. As Winzen states, 'collecting is the imaginative process of association made material'[310], which is demonstrated by Tyson's cubes and Hiller's boxes due to their use of associations as a way of showing the interconnectedness between things (objects, concepts, structures), in Tyson's work and the slippages of meaning between vernacular language and everyday objects within Hiller's work.

Within artists' collections, the finding and use of fragments and everyday phenomena, and free association as material within the work, are inextricably linked to the last two strategies of chance and wandering (or as Najafi termed it, meandering) as methodologies of making the work. Within artists' collections that utilise both scientific knowledge and sensible intuition, chance and wandering

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[310] M Winzen, 'Collecting – so normal, so paradoxical', in I Schaffner & M Winzen (eds), Deep storage: collecting, storing and archiving in art, trans. A Böger, Prestel-Verlag, Munich, New York, 1998, p. 22.

provide ways of encountering and engaging with the corporeal and mental continuum of existence that invites the unexpected, fortuitous, happenstance, entropic, and chaotic into the implied order of the artist's collection.

Serendipity – an active search for the chance encounter

The idea of chance is not a new strategy for artists to explore. Chance became an important approach to making work (both literary and visual) by the Dadaists and Surrealists, who sought the unusual juxtapositions that the chance encounter created and the way in which the uncanny, curious, and new entered into everyday life. Implicit to Dadaist and Surrealist art making practices such as drawing and collage, chance is reflected as automatism in order to discover new and unfamiliar situations, for example, *Exquisite Corpse (Cadavre exquis) (1938)* (Fig. 139) by French artists Andre Breton, Jacquline Lamba, and Yves Tanguy.[311] Through these practices, the use of chance serves to unfetter the aesthetic and conscious choices of the artist that are informed by their cultural and social environments, in order to surpass expected conventions. However, chance is also a strategy used by artists such as Susan Hiller and Tacita Dean, in conjunction with fragments, everyday phenomena and association, in order to disrupt the linearity of the narrative elements of their work. It is here that collecting (and the collection as tangible evidence of this process) plays an important role in how chance is used.

Fig. 139

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[311] For a detailed account of the randomness of chance and automatism within the Dada, Surrealism and the paintings of Jackson Pollock, see G Brecht, 'Chance imagery (1957)', in M Iversen, *Chance*, Whitechapel Gallery, London & The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010, pp. 34 – 45.

Within collecting, chance plays as much of a role in the acquisition of singularities as a directive method of searching does. However, chance is not necessarily just a random event or the product of automatism within artist's collections. Gerhard Richter speaks of his strategy of employing chance within his *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* and *Colour Chart (1966 – ongoing)* projects as 'it's never blind chance: it's a chance that is always planned'.[312] Richter uses chance as a way of bringing objectivity into his methodology in ways that positively utilise chance's simultaneously destructive and constructive properties to create outcomes that, as Foucault puts it above, 'enables one to get free of one's self'. In Richter's work the systematised use of chance's randomness is designed to 'eliminate the subjective point of view of the author (artist)'.[313] What this creates is the work's ability to transcend the conceptual and imaginative limitations of the artist in favour of discovering new relationships and ways of approaching formal, aesthetic and conceptual concerns. In this way, chance assists in the construction of the work, but as a process of gathering things, objects, images, information that create Hiller's and Dean's collections, chance is both a systematic and an intuitive process that simultaneously removes the artist's directive influence, yet is also implicitly shaped by it.

In 'Collections', Tacita Dean, recounts her lifelong ability to discover four-leaf clovers within her everyday life as a way to 'find without looking'.[314] These four-leaf clovers (which Dean has collected since she was about eight years old) formed the basis of her work, *Book with Leaves (1995)* (Fig. 140), where she presented her ongoing collection in a book as a way of engaging with the idea of luck, chance and coincidence through a systematic investigation. However, once Dean had exhibited this collection as an artwork, she recounts that she was unable to find any more four-leafed clovers. She states, 'I had turned the accidental action of finding a clover into something altogether too self-conscious … I suddenly searched too hard and could no longer find'.[315] To use chance to find fortuitous things or, in other words, to use

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[312] Richter, G, 'Interview with Benjamin Buchloh (1986)', in H-U Obrist (ed), *Gerhard Richter - the daily practice of painting: writings and interviews 1962-1993*, trans. D Britt, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1995, p. 159.

[313] A Dezeuze, 'Origins of the Fluxus score: from indeterminacy to 'do-it-yourself' artwork (2002)', in M Iversen, *Chance*, Whitechapel Gallery, London & The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010, p. 75.

[314] T Dean, 'Collections (2000)', in M Iversen, *Chance*, Whitechapel Gallery, London & The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2010, p. 215.
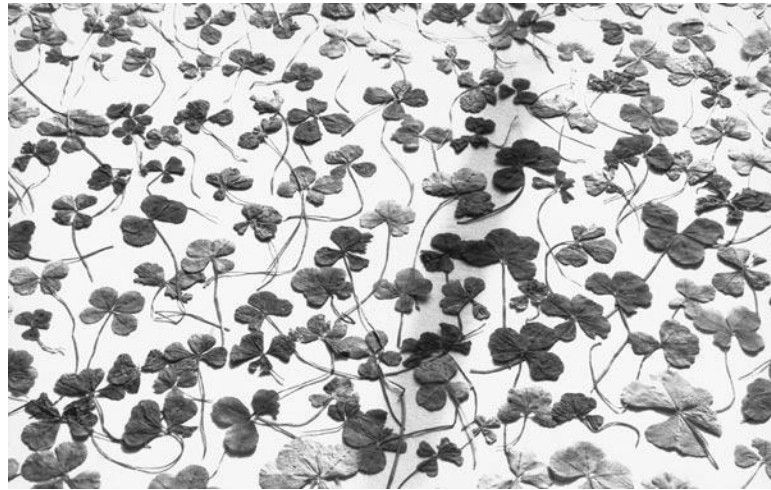
[315] ibid.

Fig. 140

serendipity, is to be free from one's self just enough so that happenstance can occur. As such, serendipity is like association, it resides on the liminal periphery of the unconscious, focus on it for too long and the poetry of these phenomena disappears. However, Hiller also sees a positivity about this tension, stating, 'I particularly like the way that the mundane becomes special as soon as you pay attention to it … I particularly like the way the shapes of things shift when you look hard at them'.[316] For both Dean and Hiller working with chance is about finding a balance between the sensible intuition of feeling and the scientific observation of knowing which begins with finding the objects, images and information to work with. Serendipity is a recurring methodology and motif within the construction of Dean's work that along with notions of time and different interpretations of history forms her lyrical narrative approach.[317] Utilising this strategy in her project, *Floh (2001)* (Fig. 141)*,* which was produced as a book, Dean collected found photographs from flea markets over a seven year period. The presentation of these amateur photographs, anonymous mementos and images too skill-less to include in a family album, mirror the same randomness by which these photographs were found. In this way, Dean renders her chance encounters as material through the act of collecting both methodologically in its construction and through its structure of a random and juxtaposed format. By refusing to group these photographs into any thematic categories, Dean's collection

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[316] Hiller, 'The provisional texture of reality', op. cit., p. 27.
[317] C Wallis, 'Introduction', in Tate Trustees, *Tacita Dean*, Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd, Milbank, London, 2001, p. 9.

Fig. 141

reflects the heterogeneity of the *Wunderkammer*, which allows the associative qualities of the imagery to suggest an incomplete narrative. Furthermore, Dean's decision to leave these happenstance images without a textual component displays 'Dean's experience of coming across the images in the flea market, each moment of enchanted discovery'.[318] The chance encounters with the photographs that the book's layout creates is important to Dean's concern that the work provides an experience of discovery for the viewer that matches Dean's own experience in the collection of imagery and the construction of the work.

Within Hiller's and Dean's practices, serendipity represents a balance between the randomness of chance within the serial game of the collection and the associative

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[318] M Godfrey, 'Photography found and lost: on Tacita Dean's Floh', *October*, vol. 114, Autumn 2005, pp. 96.

and intuitive input of the artist, that allows the process of making to determine the outcome rather than the artist imposing the outcome on the material. Chance also provides a poetic way of interacting with and accruing objects, manifesting both internally and externally, through the act of wandering. Wandering, as a serendipitous form of searching, provides a methodological counterpart to chance that links the external material world with the internal psychological realm. This is significant since it acknowledges the personalised and internalised dialogues an individual has with the world around them.

The strategy of wandering

The Early Modern collection was a site of discovery, both in how the singularities were collected and presented, that conflated the peregrination of the *viateur/curieux,* and encounters with new objects in the field within the singular space of the archive. This method has similarities with historical forms of artists' collections, such as collage, assemblage and installation, in which artists used existing spaces and materials to discover and create new possibilities that made everyday phenomena and objects extraordinary. Central to this transformation is recognition of the correlation between psychological experience of the material world and the material world itself. Summarising American literary theorist Susan Stewart, James Clifford states that 'the collector discovers, acquires, salvages objects. The objective world is given, not produced'.[319] Yet a personal response to the objective world is a production of historical, cultural, and social factors that influence individual subjectivity. This is where the Dadaists, Surrealists, and Situationists sought to free themselves from these constructs, and one of their strategies was wandering.

The Surrealists used a random form of wandering, termed 'trawling', as a way to create new experiences from chance encounters in everyday life. The encounters were a physical way, through walking and collecting, to mine their surroundings but they were also a way to mine their own unconscious. The Situationists sought to disrupt prescribed structural, social and personal daily movements within the city through *dérive*, a poetic form of navigating corporeal spaces through a psychological

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[319] J Clifford, 'On collecting art and culture' in S During (ed.), *The cultural studies reader*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, 1999, p. 61.

response to the urban, manmade landscape. This mapping of the landscape through a personal intervention is reminiscent of Japanese conceptual artist On Kawara's project *I Went (1968 – 1979)* (Fig. 142), in which Kawara traced his daily travels on photocopied maps, representing a site of lived experience. German artist Franz Ackermann demonstrates this psychogeographical response to the landscape in his work, *Mental Map: Evasion VI (1996)* (Fig. 143), which collapses the conceptual expression of physical space into the canvas.
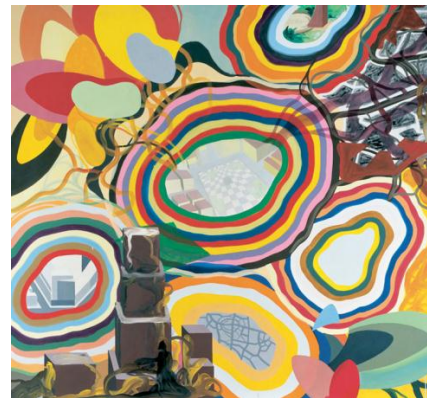

Fig. 142

Fig. 143

Like Richter's use of chance, *dèrive* was not random; it had structure and conceptual criteria that assisted in breaking free from a habitual way of experiencing everyday life. Guy Debord describes the establishment of a potential 'rendezvous' in which the person practicing *dèrive* arrives at a certain location and at a specific time in order to engage with a stranger by chance as a form of behavioural disorientation.[320] Ironically, attempts to apply *dèrive* to the countryside produced dismal results.[321] This does not indicate the inability of *psychogeography* to exist in the natural world; Romanticism (c. 1750s – 1850s) explored this condition within the sublime, however difficulties in traversing the vastness of the wilderness as well as a lack of human presence could have been contributing factors in Debord's inability to apply *dèrive* to the countryside. Stewart posits that the metaphorical relationship between humans and the landscape is based upon geography. Starting with the suburb, a site devoid of a 'landscape of voyage', the present is destroyed by the nostalgic (the past) and the

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[320] G Debord, *Theory of the dérive*, trans. K Knabb, Situationist International Online, 1956, retrieved 29 July 2011, < http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>.
[321] ibid.

technological (the future), and nature is incorporated into the interior of the home.[322] In contrast, the infinite horizon and distance of the ideal countryside is where humanity searches for traces of the personal against the patterns of nature.

To traverse the countryside is to experience the illusion of movement and to recognise that knowledge is only ever partial.[323] The topography of the city further fragments knowledge: 'to walk in the city is to experience the disjuncture of partial vision/partial consciousness. The narrativity of this walking is belied by a simultaneity we know and yet cannot experience'.[324] Here personal movement, and with it the field of possibility, is foiled by the absence of a horizon, the cyclical and overlapping lives of individuals and the silence of the monumentality of the state.[325] It is exactly these metaphorical spaces that artists' collections reflect in microcosm, spaces that are not unknown or undiscovered like they were during the Age of Exploration, but spaces that, through their fragmentation, can be reassembled and recontextualised within the collection.

The artist as a wanderer of both corporeal and mental landscapes seeks to 'get free of oneself' in order to 'stray afield' and translate this experience into the work of art. The objects collected by artists for their work signify a *punctum* within the *studium* of the field of material production that bombards the social/cultural landscape, for example, the found photographs chosen by Dean in *Floh (2001)*. This *punctum* must be 'found without looking', thus the strategy of wandering as a form of 'navigating without looking' is so important to this process. Dean's idea of finding without looking in order to 'freeze chance' and construct her work is akin to Surrealist 'trawling'.[326] However, where the impetus of Surrealist 'trawling' was to expose the immaterial psychic reality behind the material world, Dean's collections reflect her literal and metaphorical navigations into space and time, past and present, and fact and fiction.[327]

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[322] S Stewart, *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection,* 9th edn, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2005, p. 1.
[323] ibid.
[324] ibid., p. 2.
[325] ibid.
[326] Godfrey, op. cit., p. 101.
[327] Wallis, loc. cit.

Central to these navigations is the relic, which are objects and places that represent a 'dislocation from an original context which is now lost'.[328] As mnemonic objects these relics are fragmented like Stewart's souvenirs. They function as palimpsests in which some meanings are irretrievably erased, reflecting failed or abandoned visions as narrative asides to the monument of History. In this way, Dean shares the Surrealist interest in anachronisms and obsolescence; her investigations of failed future visions, such as the Bubble House (a 1970s prototype beach house designed to withstand hurricanes) in her film *Bubble House (1999)* (Fig. 144) and the English Hythe Sound Mirrors (an acoustic warning system designed to detect enemy aircraft that was ineffective as it was too sensitive) in her film *Sound Mirrors (1999)* (Fig. 145), as well as her concern about analogue technologies, such as photography and film, all hark back to the Surrealists' interest in French photographer Eugene Atget (who in himself was a curiosity) and his photographs of 'Old' Paris as relics of an erased history (Fig. 146).
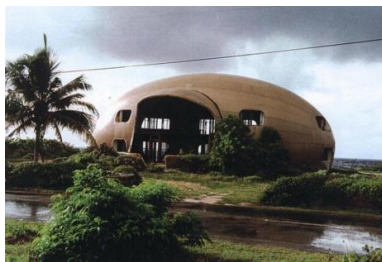

| Fig. 144 | Fig. 145 | Fig. 146 |

As strategies of artistic curiosity, wandering, chance, free association, everyday phenomena and fragments, manifest a form of positive and poetic estrangement that injects wonder into an experience of the world.[329] Russian theorist Svetlana Boym states,

> The device of estrangement places emphasis on the process rather than the product of art, on retardation and deferral of *dénouement*, on cognitive

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[328] ibid.

[329] Estrangement here is based upon Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky's constructive use of the term as processes the author uses that makes the familiar, unfamiliar for the reader. See, Habib, M A R, *A history of literary criticism and theory*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2008, pp. 603 – 604. Which is opposed to Marx's notion of alienation that manifests materially through a loss of control of an individual's power of production, which causes a feeling of anomie. See, D Collinson & K Plant, *Fifty major philosophers*, 2nd edn, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 271.

ambivalence and play. By making things strange, the artist does not simply displace them from an everyday context into an artistic framework; he also helps to "return sensation" to life itself, to reinvent the world, to experience it anew. Estrangement is what makes art artistic; but, by the same token, it makes life lively, or worth living.[330]

In this way, to 'return sensation' into the world is embraced by Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg as a form of sensible intuition exemplified by these strategies of curiosity and through embracing the estrangement that occurs not only by the way the unfamiliar enters the realm of the familiar but also by the loss and displacement of history. It is through the discursive platform of the artist's collection, counter memory enters the archive, attempting to remedy an amnesiac culture by transforming them from 'distracted viewers onto engaged discussants'.[331] This is done in Hiller's social constructs, Dean's historical narratives and, as will be discussed below, Ruppersberg's uncanny scenes, through the artists' own lateral investigations that embrace curiosity, disruption, dislocation and a lack of resolution and translate their feeling of discovery to the viewer.

Narratives of ambiguity – the chronotope and delightful incongruities

The artist's collection provides a structure in which objects and images, which have a symbolic function, interrelate, creating a physical site of narrative. Bakhtin defined the term chronotope to denote 'a configuration of spatial and temporal indicators in a fictional setting where (and when) certain activities and stories *take place*'.[332] As discussed in Chapter One, Foucault redefines the term 'fiction' as the inherently subjective documentation of History; in other words; it is a narrative construction. Spatially and temporally, an artist's collection is a unique site of narrative that replaces a literary language with a visual language, which through the slippage this change in registers creates, highlights its inherent 'memory crisis', leading the way for multiple interpretations.

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[330] S Boym, *Architecture of the Off-Modern*, FORuM Project, Buell Centre for the Study of American Architecture & Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2008, pp. 18 – 19, cited in Najafi, op. cit., p. 142.
[331] Foster, 'An archival impulse', op. cit., p.6
[332] Clifford, op. cit., p. 70.

Through their lack of hierarchy and disruption of institutional and scientific structure, Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg create, to use Foster's term, 'informal archives'; these collections illuminate the 'nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private'.[333] The aim of these collections in contemporary art is to transform traditional historical authority and ideological structure through not only presenting material fragments but to expose the fragmentary nature of any form of meaning making. This, in turn, fractures the archive's hegemony, which opens up alternate dialogues and incorporates subjective and fictive positions into the archive's structure creating alternative knowledge and counter memory. These 'informal' collections reflect ambiguous narratives that highlight the obscure, the enigmatic, the banal, and the extraordinary. Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg avoid overt narratives in favour of deconstructing the chronotope of the collection.

German theorist and curator Wolfgang Zumdick describes his insight into Ruppersberg's practice:

> I surmised that this act of collecting was an integral part of it and consequently it became apparent that collecting also always has a poetic side. It seemed to me to a certain extent as though he was looking for words in the material itself, a search for words which had in turn been transformed into objects, and I was curious to know how these objectified 'words' might be if arranged as a poem.[334]

Ruppersberg's collections are 'the sites of fictions'[335], where fragmented objects, images and texts act like clues that set up a 'mysterious and open narrative'.[336] This occurs because Ruppersberg constructs spaces that are pregnant pauses, sites 'where

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[333] Foster, 'An archival impulse', op. cit., p. 5.
[334] W Zumdick, 'Letter to a friend', in Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (ed.), *Allen Ruppersberg: one of many, origins and variants*, Verlag der Buchhadlung Walther König, Köln, 2006, p. 92.
[335] H Singerman, 'Allen Ruppersberg: drawn from life, in The Museum of Contemporary Art, *Allen Ruppersberg: the secret of life and death, volume 1 1969 - 1984*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles & Black Sparrow Press, Santa Barbara, 1985, p. 22, cited in A Goldstein, 'A more democratic kind of art obect' in Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (ed.), *Allen Ruppersberg: one of many, origins and variants*, Verlag der Buchhadlung Walther König, Köln, 2006, p. 31.
[336] Goldstein, loc. cit., (p. 31)

stories are about to happen'[337], for example, the book *24 Pieces (1970),* (Fig. 147) which presents photographs of interventions Ruppersberg staged within private and public transitory spaces, for example, hotel rooms, nature trails, restaurant booths which use 'clues' such as a coat hanging in a tree and a framed pictured removed from the wall and carefully placed upon a bed to allude to a narrative. While the viewer knows that there is a narrative that contextualises the work, this narrative has

Fig. 147

been left to the collective imagery to tell, rather than through the any overt participation by the artist, which in turn creates slippages in the story, as meaning is lost in translation from textual to optical registers. Ruppersberg's story telling logic is one that blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction through the minimal manner

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[337] ibid.

in which the story is told, the 'empty' situations it presents and the extra-ordinary circumstances in which ordinary objects are placed (as in the special inclusion of them in a gallery setting). Ruppersberg describes his role as the hidden narrator, in terms of being 'the reader', a term which he also uses to describe his position and methodology as an artist, substituting the authorial voice for the voice of the reader.[338] This repositioning for Ruppersberg is about 'finding' this voice and exposing it through the collected objects, images and texts in his work.

The images are all devoid of a human subject (even the legs of a man in the bottom left image, appear as a dismembered object) yet each *mise en scène* displays traces of the human subject, however these traces are out of place; the subject the images allude to is a participant in aberrant behaviour, or perhaps has met with foul play. Furthermore the narrative is rendered mysterious through a lack of textual accompaniment (a strategy Dean also employs in her books). This is a conscious decision by Ruppersberg in order to involve the viewer in the construction of the work's meaning (however irretrievable), through individual interpretations of the imagery and their interrelation. This strategy finds similarities with German surrealist artist Max Ernst, whose picture novels, for example, *A Week of Kindness (Une Semaine De Bonté) (1934)* (Fig. 148), used juxtaposition to create uncanny scenes.

Fig. 148

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[338] D Levine, *Allen Ruppersberg*, Journal of Contemporary Art, 1992, retrieved 12 August 2011, <http://jca-online.com/ruppersberg.html>.

Fig. 149

By removing objects and images from traditional textual narratives, an artists' collection provides a space of interpretation, for example, Hiller's film, *Psi Girls (1999)* (Fig. 149), which portrays images of female characters with extraordinary powers from popular films. English art theorist Louise Milne describes how this narrative ambiguity functions: 'Through the clearing away of narrative, the possible and impossible aspects of each image direct viewers to the remaining supply of context in the room – our own banks of memory and association'.[339] Here Milne, refers to narrative in its most traditional context, because as this work and *From the Freud Museum (1991 – 97)* demonstrate, memory and association have their own narrative function that resist the resolution of traditional storylines.

Both Ruppersberg and Dean also avoid adding text to describe their imagery (which conversely would make the imagery illustrate the text), with Ruppersberg interested in the moment between action and stillness in *24 Pieces (1970)* and Dean highlighting the irretrievable histories of her found imagery in *Floh (2001)* when he states,

> I do not want to give these images explanations, descriptions by the finder about how and where they were found, or guesses as to what stories they might or might not tell. I want them to keep the silence of the flea market, the silence they had when I found them, the silence of the lost object.[340]

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[339] L Milne, 'On the side of angels', in J Lingwood (ed.), *Susan Hiller: recall, selected works, 1969 – 2004*, Baltic, Gateshead, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto & Kunsthalle, Basel, 2004, p. 148, cited in S Hiller, 'The multiple ethics of art', in A M Kokoli (ed.), *Susan Hiller - the provisional texture of reality: selected talks and texts, 1977 – 2007*, JRP| Ringier, Zurich & Les Presses du reel, Dijon, 2008, p. 147.

[340] T Dean, 'Floh', in J Garimorth, M Newman, T Dean, J L Nancy & L Bossé, *Seven Books*, ARC, Paris, 2003, cited in Godfrey, op. cit., p. 92.

However, unlike Ruppersberg's *24 Pieces (1970),* Dean's *Floh (2001)* lacks a structural hierarchy, seriality and 'readability' that give Ruppersberg's work a clearer narrative; where Ruppersberg's book is foreboding, Dean's is illegible and haphazard. This is a recurring strategy of Dean's, seen in other works such as, *The Story of Minke the Whale* inthe series *The Russian Ending (2001)* (Fig. 150), a group

Fig. 150

of enlarged postcards of disasters and images of death, named after the practice of Danish filmmakers to film an alternate tragic ending for the Russian market. These images are covered in scattered inscriptions that are directive, expressive and descriptive such as 'poor minke' and 'slut' (Danish for 'the end'), some of which are legible and while others function as traces; all designed to disorient the idea of a linear narrative for the viewer who has to scan the image rather than read it from left to right, which instead yields a personalised trajectory of exploration within the singular cinematic 'frame' of the image. English director of the Tate Gallery, Stephen Deuchar, defines Dean's narratives as 'not resolved by endings: they require and request their audience's participation and speculation and are thereby offered with an apparently generous ambiguity' that through 'gently unfolding journeys of exploration across the territories of natural, created and mental landscape' that

expose the 'shifting relationships between the immutability of history, the longings of now, and the expectations of tomorrow'.[341]

As a chronotope, the collection provides a site for ambiguous narratives by rupturing linearity. Furthermore, while the social, cultural and historical impetus of Hiller's, Dean's, and Ruppersberg's work and their use of found material establishes a factual context to their collections, the 'silence', temporal incongruity and uncanny construction of their chronotopes positions their collections as fictional. Moreover, these works require both a public dialogue, through their positioning within a gallery context, and a personal interpretation, first by the artist in constructing the work and then by the viewer in response to the work, that renders the narrative subjective. In Hiller's, Dean's, and Ruppersberg's work, truth when presented as fragmented becomes stranger than fiction.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how artists engage with the *Wunderkammer* model to construct collections embodying curiosity, serendipity, and wandering. As strategies of making artwork, curiosity, serendipity, and wandering introduce chaos to the collection's logical system of classification, thereby rendering the narrative function of the collection ambiguous. To this end Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg use the collection to investigate the social and cultural roles of association, construct counter-memories and present 'loaded' narrative scenes where stories are about to happen. They do this through a model of collecting that invites the personal, intuitive, heterochronistic, ambiguous, curious, and fictive into the logical system of the historical archive.

This chapter examined how the idiosyncrasy of the *Wunderkammer* model and the rationality of the systematic model of collecting relate to Lévi-Strauss's definition of sensible intuition and scientific knowledge in order to describe how an artistic methodology is congruent to a collecting methodology by examining the artwork of

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[341] S Deuchar, 'Foreword', in Tate Trustees, *Tacita Dean*, Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd, Milbank, London, 2001, p. 7.

Tyson and Dion. These artists are important because they acknowledge the material and immaterial condition of the 'world as wonder' and approach their cataloguing projects with this psychical condition in mind. Furthermore, this chapter defined four strategies of collecting that artists use, related to the social, cultural, and historical environment: the use of fragments and everyday phenomena, free association, chance, and wandering.

In the construction of narrative, the use of fragments and everyday phenomena provide symbolic objects that can be used as a language which are both incomplete and familiar. Moreover, the central strategies of chance and wandering as both a material and immaterial approach to the world, renders the familiar strange by disrupting temporalities, dislocates personal logic and aesthetic from art-making and recontextualises objects in new ways. This, coupled with the use of fragments and everyday phenomena, render the narratives the collection creates as ambiguous, uncanny and curious, demonstrating that contemporary artists' collections are as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private. In this regard, Hiller, does not see truth and fiction as dichotomies working in opposition, she sees them as open possibilities that present a field of choices to be interpreted. For Dean, truth becomes stranger than fiction when rational forms of presentation are combined with serendipity and wandering. Ruppersberg uses the collection to set a stage, to make imagination and interpretation material within the work. This is significant as it establishes how the slippages of meaning that occur within this method of inquiry are translated to the viewer as narrative ambiguity.

Conclusion

Unclassifying the Classified: curiosity as an intuitive methodology within artists' collections

'If collecting is meaningful, it is because it shuns closure and the security of received evaluations and instead opens its eyes to existence – the world around us, both cultural and natural, in all its unpredictability and contingent complexity'.[342]

What is a collection if not a personalised method of inquiry into the world and our relationship with it? This research has discussed artists' collections that represent a concrete expression of curiosity that focuses objects and concepts into a singular theatre of the world. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that artists' collections are not just the product of a rational systematic inquiry, or the product of sensible intuition. It is the combination of both types of logic that contribute to how artists address the immaterial and material condition of being in the world, rather than the ideologies of the institution or the obsessions of private collections. This dissertation has shown that historically and traditionally artists' collections have been discussed within the context of the museum and its related philosophies about collecting such as American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth's *The Brooklyn Museum Collection: The Play of the Unmentionable (1990)* and American contemporary artist Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum (1992)*. This discourse places the impetus of the artist's collection within an institutional critique and their collecting methodology within a systematic way of ordering the world that subverts the museum's overarching metanarrative and historical continuum. In doing so, these artists adhere to the language of the institution that positions the natural and social world within a singular framework.

However, this research has shown that artists' collections do not propose a singular view of the world, positioned within a linear 'History', nor do they display an

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[342] J Elsner & R Cardinal, 'Introduction' in J Elsner & R Cardinal (eds), *The cultures of collecting*, Reaktion Books Ltd, London, 1994, pp. 5 – 6.

institutional voice of order, authority, and meta-narrative. Rather, artists collect as a way of intuitively responding to the immediate world they inhabit: the material world, through the collection of found objects and an engagement with material culture; the social world, through their interest in the mechanisms of socio-cultural and historical constructs; the psychological world, which becomes externalised through the creation of new artwork; and the emotional world, which is the immediacy they have with the things they make as artists and the things they cherish as collectors based upon their personalised history. These conditions all work together to constitute the artistic practices examined. This is important as it demonstrates a shift from the ideology of the institution to the poetry of the individual.

Contemporary artists who use a collecting methodology within their work are directly and personally responding to their natural and socio-cultural environments in poetic ways that seek to translate unquantifiable experiences and hidden occurrences into the microcosm of the collection as a model of the world as wonder. They see the condition of being in the world, not one of dominion or mastery but rather one of contingency and discovery. To this end, these artists, such as American/English artist Susan Hiller, have engaged with alternative models of collecting that embrace the intuitive, subjective and curious without discounting or ignoring the important structures of legibility and inquiry that the institutional collection provides.

By utilising both models of collecting, artists such as Hiller, English artist Tacita Dean, and American artist Allen Ruppersberg are able to express narratives that remain unresolved. They hover between fact and fiction, the real and the imagined, the material and immaterial, and the familiar and unfamiliar creating a spectre of a narrative that the viewer must interpret. In doing so, these artists move away from the didactic collections of the institution and instead construct a discursive space that implicates the viewer as an active participant within the collection's theatre as opposed to a passive spectator. This significant development in artists' collections has been demonstrated in the dissertation through the establishment of key concepts and terminology that have assisted in the analysis of these artists' practices.

Chapter One analysed a historical trajectory of these alternative models of collecting in order to establish the origins of artistic collections as a response to the material world. From the encyclopaedic impetus of Early Modern cabinets of curiosities that conflated concrete singularities with a theosophical vision, such as Italian apothecary Ferrante Imperato's, *Dell'Historia Naturale (1599)*, to the creation of photographic souvenirs to document disappearing landscapes like the work of the French photographer Eugene Atget, or from the politically driven use of everyday imagery to disrupt social conventions in Dadaist collages like German artist Hannah Höch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of German) (1919 – 20)* to the Surrealist use of symbolic objects and images to mine the unconscious, as in German artist Max Ernst's *La Femme 100 têtes (Hundred Headless Woman) (1930)*. These collections sought not to impose a conceptual order but to instead work through objects as a way to expose forgotten trajectories, hidden knowledge, felt experience and alternative ways of engaging with the world as a response to the increasingly ordered and controlled social and physical environment.

Central to these collections is a personal interaction with the natural and urban landscape through daily wanderings and expeditions. As demonstrated by the work of Situationist International, through their strategy of *dérive*, this landscape is not only corporeal, social, cultural, and historical, but also psychological. This is significant, as an artist's collection reflects the material environment, the societal constructs that shape it and the artist's individual encounter with it. Furthermore this engagement with the landscape is indicative of the artistic drives of discovery and expression. These collections are all reflective of the artist's personal intervention upon the experience of being in the world with all of its fragmentation and complexity, exemplified by German artist Kurt Schwitters' collecting methodology in *Merz* (1918 – 1948).

As opposed to the systematic collection represented in the museum, which relies upon the illusion of objectivity to construct an authoritative version of the world through a rigid and hierarchical taxonomy, Höch's, Ernst's, and Schwitters' collections are reflective of what this dissertation has established as the *Wunderkammer* model. This model uses subjectivity, idiosyncrasy, juxtaposition,

heterogeneity, and a lack of hierarchy to transform the collection from a rigid system of presentation to a discursive system of interrelation, where each work is open to multiple interpretations. Central to how this occurs was the establishment of the collection as a framework that presents items in a relational setting as opposed to a static structure.

In Chapter Two, it was shown that artists use the collection as a site of interrelation because it provides an architecture that contextualises the objects held within it. Internally within the collection this architecture is both the material/formal structural organisation (that determines the artwork's physicality, whether three-dimensional like an installation, two-dimensional as in collage, or temporal/spatial in the order of the archive) and conceptual organisational logic (which provides a framework that contextualises the images, objects, and texts collected). This internal architecture is in turn influenced by the external architecture of societal, cultural, historical, economic, and political superstructures that contribute to how an artwork is constructed, presented, and received.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, artists have explored various ways of manipulating this formal and conceptual structure as a methodology within their practices. This allows artists to visually investigate and interrogate societal constructs and personal experience, using the collection as a narrative framework. Within this the artistic collection exists in many forms such as sculptures, paintings, assemblages, collages, artists' books, or installations. In order to analyse these outcomes, this dissertation proposed the three spatial metaphors of the box, tableau, and archive. These metaphors correspond to three-dimensional, two-dimensional, and temporal/spatial collections respectively. This analysis determined there are two organisational methodologies that artists use in the construction and presentation of their collections: a systematic and a heterogeneous approach. These approaches represent two different logics corresponding to the models of the systematic collection and the *Wunderkammer*.

The systematic approach uses the formal structures of the museum and the grid to provide a logical and rational space in which to compare and contrast elements. The recognition of such a structural approach was developed during the 1960s and 1970s

through artists engaged with Institutional Critique, such as Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, (1968 – 1972).* Here Broodthaers exposes the institution's narrative framework and uses it as a tool of subversion in the construction of his museum fictions. This work exemplifies artists' investigations into how the museum organises their collection in order to express a historical and authoritative position. This is done by placing objects within a set of rational relations that create a critical distance between the viewer, the objects within the collection and each individual object's original context.

The heterogeneous approach, on the other hand, removes the critical distance that the objectivity of the systematic approach creates. Rather, it reflects the spatial logic of the *Wunderkammer* and the 'flatbed' to construct a chaotic space of flux in order to express temporal, emotional and cultural conditions as a barrage. This is not limited to installations that construct an environment; it also extends to two-dimensional work such as Swiss contemporary artist Thomas Hirschhorn's collages, for example, *La Série des Antalgiques (Upfen) (2005).* This work is indicative of an engagement with the social, cultural, and historical environment that reflects a lived experience through the conflation of contrasting elements from visual/material culture into a singular space, creating a visual overload that is emotionally charged.

What is apparent is that many contemporary artists employ both approaches in the construction of their artwork. German artist Karsten Bott exemplified this in *One of Each (Von Jedem Eins) (1993 - ongoing)* from his 'Archive of Contemporary History' (1988 - ongoing). While in storage, Bott's collection is systematically classified and cross-referenced, yet when exhibited these classifications are discarded, creating a non-hierarchical, heterogeneous space. What this hybrid approach displays is that artists use both methodologies in the production of their artworks as it constructs ambiguity, slippages and a renewed set of relations within each site. Bott's transformation of the work from a rational organisational structure and logic to an intuitive one also creates slippages of intent and meaning. This indicates that the structure of the collection constructs a way in which the collection is approached and 'read'. This is especially evident in artists' archives and installations such as Hirschhorn's *It's Burning Everywhere (2009),* that physically position the viewer within the environment of the collection. Works like this require

the viewer to determine how they navigate the space. Through their approach, they interact with collected imagery, objects and text in a unique manner and determine which items hold personal significance and this personal experience correlates to an individual interpretation of the work.

Importantly, this demonstrates that an artist's collection constructs a visual, physical, and contingent set of relations. Furthermore, through the artist's methodological choices, these relations are guided by organisational structure and logic. This material and conceptual framework provides a platform upon which to create multiple meanings as a theatre of interrelation. To this end, collections become a tool that artists use to present situations that the viewer is required to participate in, both physically and mentally. As a result, the viewer's interaction and interpretation makes their own social, psychological and emotional experience, material in the work. In this way the artist's collection is a site of both collective and individual histories.

Chapter Three determined that the ability of the collection to convey immaterial phenomena (traces, social/cultural/ historical constructs, psyche and emotions) and serve a narrative function relies upon the signification of the object. This signification is twofold. It operates on a collective level where the object represents a social/cultural/historical context and on an individual level where the object represents a personal history and experience. Contemporary artists, such as Mark Dion, Christian Boltanski, and Annette Messager, are increasingly engaged with the relationships between the public and the private, the collective and the individual. Central to this engagement is the way in which the object and the collection are intrinsically related to events, experiences and identity through their narrative function. This works in three significant ways within the practices of the artists surveyed, as witness to or evidence of an event, as a personal souvenir, and as a relic. The outcomes of artistic practice exist both as product (the artwork, which is the concrete artefact) and process (the performance, action, event of making the work, which is often hidden).

While movements such as Happenings and Performance Art questioned the traditional art object by transforming it into an ephemeral and temporal process, for

example, Joseph Beuys' *I Like America and America Likes Me (1974),* it also exposed the reliance upon photography and artefacts to provide documentary evidence, after the fact. In this way the photograph and the artefact serve to authenticate physical experience by providing a witness to and evidence of an event. This serves to translate the lived experience of an event into a narrative of the event through a form of concrete memory. Both the photograph and the artefact represent an abstracted record of an event, demonstrated by Emily Jacir's *Where We Come From (2001 – 03)* and Beuys' *7000 Oaks (1982).* Yet a photograph's iconography and the artefact's materiality function differently mnemonically. The photograph documents experience by creating a framed snap shot that translates a focussed temporal experience into a two-dimensional scene, an abstracted representation of reality, where as the artefact presents physical evidence of an event. However, the artefact requires some form of contextualising information (account/documentation) that places it within a social set of relations otherwise it is unable to translate the specifics of an event.

This abstracted quality is significant when discussing both the photograph and artefact as a found object souvenir. A souvenir is a mnemonic and metonymic device that requires an accompanying narrative of experience to give the object meaning. This creates an almost paradoxical situation where, as a souvenir, the object is prescribed a specific mnemonic function, however through the object's condition as 'found' (and therefore severed from its context), it acts as a material trace or witness to an unknowable and irretrievable event. Furthermore artworks such as Gerhard Ricter's *Atlas (1962 – ongoing)* and Dean's *Floh (2001)* expose how the object and photograph's capacity for memory is in conflict with the collection's capacity for amnesia.

Boltanski and Messager utilise the narrative ambiguity created by the dialectics of amnesia and memory in the construction of their work by collecting found objects and recontexutalising them within their collections. Within the framework of the collection, objects fulfil a specific mnemonic and metonymic function that allow them to be used as signifiers. It is the familiarity of Boltanski and Messager's everyday items that gives the collection's narrative legibility. This allows objects to have a personal resonance with the viewer. Yet the structure of the collection creates

a flexible 'readability' that creates multiple interpretations and therefore constructs multiple narratives within the work. An artwork's narrative is important as it transforms the work of art from being autonomous and self-referential and places it within a greater social/ cultural context. Moreover, within the work of contemporary artists this social/cultural context also reflects an individual and intimate experience, which is demonstrated by the collections of artists, such as Dean or Boltanski. These collections differ from other artists' collections such as the political museum interventions of American artist Fred Wilson, whose work, *Mining the Museum (1992)*, serves to critique institutions and society at large, or the postmodern irony and pastiche of American Pop artist Andy Warhol, whose *Time Capsules (1974 – 87)* reflect a tongue-in-cheek approach to archiving that questions fame, significance and preservation.

Rather than being critical or ironic, Dean's and Boltanski's collections represent a new way of engaging with the social, material and psychic world that construct open-ended narratives that are poetic and without resolution. These artistic collections are not cohesive or chronological. Instead they display multiple points of entry and departure and rely upon the viewer's individual interpretation to construct meaning. To this end, contemporary artists who use this approach use the collection to create propositions that explore idiosyncratic aspects of the world, as opposed to fictional stories or historical metanarratives.

In Chapter Four, *Truth is Stranger than Fiction: Rendering the familiar unfamiliar as a strategy of discovery*, artists were shown to use the alternative collecting strategy of the *Wunderkammer* as defined in Chapter One to subvert the traditional archival strategy of the systematic collection to express intuitive, curious, anachronistic, and uncanny events that fall outside of institutional narratives. It is important to re-establish a critical understanding of the methodology of the *Wunderkammer* after a repeated misuse of the term to describe artworks that display a lack of criticality. Redefined as a methodological and organisational *model,* the *Wunderkammer* provides an insight into how artists such as Dean, Hiller, and Ruppersberg are conflating factual and poetic systems of collecting within their respective work.

In this regard, French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss's dual modes of logic (sensible intuition and scientific knowledge) has provided a way in which to describe how the model of the *Wunderkammer* restores a lack of order to the systematic collection and why both forms of logic work together to as significant modes of inquiry for the artist. The *Wunderkammer* model provides a way of working for these artists that produces curiosity and wonder about the world through rendering fragments and everyday phenomena unique. Furthermore it relies upon the use of free association to recontextualise objects in unexpected ways, physical and mental wandering to experience things off the beaten track, and serendipity to make chance a material within the work in order to invite the intuitive and poetic into the social, cultural and historical engagement these artists have. This model, when coupled with the systematic archival approach, renders the familiar, strange in the practices of Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg by disrupting the logic of the archive with the illogical nature of the *Wunderkammer*. Within these artists' works the site of the collection functions as a chronotope, a narrative site that constructs a microcosm of the world where the individual and the collective, the factual and the fictive, the material and the immaterial operate in new ways.

To this end, the archive and the installation are integral and predominant methods of presentation, with Boltanski, Messager, Hiller, Dean, and Ruppersberg's practices all oscillating between these two artistic outcomes. The installation constructs environmental situations that position the viewer within the interrelational play of the collection and the archive provides a system of documentation, representation and classification that can be manipulated by the artist. It is important to understand that these contemporary artists look both inwards and outwards. Their artistic production is intrinsically linked to an active knowledge about the world, societal, cultural, historical, economic and political situations and theoretical discourses, yet they are also aware of their own positions as individuals with their own histories, aesthetics, intuitions, dreams and memories. As such their practices reflect a care about this dual purpose.

This is significant because by constructing installations and archives, artists such as Boltanski, Messager, Dean, Hiller, and Ruppersberg position their work, not only within a greater historical and institutional mechanism but also within recent art

theoretical discourses on institutional critique, museum interventions, and the bureaucracy of the archive. However, rather than create work that directly and politically challenges these institutional methodologies and superstructures, these artists use the organisational and physical structure of these institutions to present the poetic, curious, intimate, unresolved and psychological as a legitimate and necessary condition of not only artistic production but of humanity's engagement with the world. For an artists' collection to be able to express the poetics of both an individual and collective experience it must engage directly with the material culture and societal constructs of the world. The artist must view everything as a potential from which to make art. In this regard, everything becomes a precious resource for the artist. Moreover, through their collections artists are able to present the significance of all aspects of being in the world by repositioning and refocussing aspects of the world that are hidden or lost.

In order to represent these aspects that are unable to be qualified scientifically, yet are integral to expressing a critical engagement with the world, artists must expand upon the traditional models of collecting that the museum/archive system represents and critically embed the irrational system that the *Wunderkammer* represents within their own collections. This is required because the museum/archive system is unable to translate the contingent and subjective condition of existence within its metanarrative or recognise the significance of the intuitive, marginal, forgotten, banal, and irrational lived experience. These poetic experiences can no longer be marginalised and dismissed within collecting systems as phenomena that are opposed to fact, to reality and to logic. Instead these artists' collections must be viewed as sites that conflate inherent dualities and paradoxes and express the synthesis between collective and individual histories, sensible intuition and scientific inquiry, memory and amnesia, fact and fiction, and the material and immaterial.

Furthermore, artists' collections must be understood as different from more traditional collecting models, such as English museology theorist Susan Pearce's systematic, souvenir and fetish collections. Unlike the museum that publically constructs and upholds a narrative of cultural identity and the connoisseur who aestheticises their cultural consumption as a private universe, the artist both responds and contributes to cultural production, by relating a personalised engagement with

the world, through the production of their artwork, into the public forum of the gallery and museum. An artist's collection represents a site of discovery, where the artist engages with an active inquiry into the world. It is through the collection of visual, conceptual, physical and emotional fragments, that artists are able to translate the given and known world into the creation of the new.

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