

Field Notes on Artistic Participation in Europe's Trans and Queer Archives

Eliza Steinbock, Sandro Weilenmann

How do artists concerned with queer and trans pasts preserve and activate archival materials such as records, accounts, audio and visual documentation? Why might archives be interested in and support their critical and creative work?

PERCOL has been a joint research project between the Universities of St Andrews, Maastricht, and Murcia. Project lead: Prof. Glyn Davis, Principal Investigator (NL); Prof. Eliza Steinbock, Principal Investigator (ES); Prof. Juan Antonio Suárez. PERCOL was generously funded by the Joint Programming Initiative Cultural Heritage and Global Change (JPICH); the project consortium is financially supported by the AHRC (United Kingdom), NWO (Netherlands), and the AEI (Spain).

'Perverse Collections' (PERCOL) asked: how can a critical and nuanced understanding of the evolution of Europe's LGBTQ+ archives be used by scholars, queer and trans community members, and GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums) sector workers to forge sustainable strategies for protecting LGBTQ+ history, and in what ways might this have transformative potential for cultural heritage politics and policy more broadly? To this end, the project mapped the growth of Europe's queer and trans archives, from the 1970s to the present; it comparatively explored the workings of these collections, including their relations to forms of state support, the understandings of LGBTQ+ history they promote locally, nationally, and internationally, and the alternative models of archiving they embody. PERCOL sought to identify the implications of queer and trans collections for other subaltern archives, as well as the wider cultural heritage sector, in terms of the challenges they present to dominant historical and political narratives, the complex polyphonic community politics they can reveal, and their creative handling of ephemeral experiences.

For more information visit:
www.percol.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk

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Our descriptive and reflective field notes have been developed in the course of the “Perverse Collections: Building Europe’s Queer and Trans Archives” (PERCOL) research consortium which ran from 1 June 2023 to 31 August 2025, funded by the European Commission’s Joint Programme Initiative on Cultural Heritage.¹ As researchers in this project based at Maastricht University in the Netherlands, we,

^{1.} the authors Eliza Steinbock and Sandro Weilenmann, [You can read more on the Project Website.](#)

offer in these pages a research-informed response to the question of what roles exist for artists in building queer and trans archives in Europe. It is our intention to showcase inspirational examples, provide practical advice and resources, and offer guidance with ethical considerations for care of different kinds of actors who (may) engage with art and archives. At times we speak more to those in cultural heritage institutions who (want to) work with creative practitioners and other times we address artists interested in archival materials, yet we acknowledge that one person might have both of these roles. This information should be of interest to anyone considering how cultural heritage is created, valued, activated, circulated, and has aesthetic qualities.

As field notes, our presentation of what we have observed remains incomplete for various reasons. First, we have not made an extensive survey but rather relied on gathering data through conducting over fifteen in-depth interviews and from our many interactions across the project’s seven organized events.² Second, the research has been carried out within a limited timeframe and is unable to account for eventualities related to budget cuts, trends in subsidies, and changing winds towards diversity, equity and inclusivity. One major concern is the current hostile political climate affecting the viability of sexual and gender diversity organizations and communities in the

^{2.} present and uncertain future. With this in mind, we offer examples of how tangible and intangible forms of heritage into our undergo preservation and activation in a manner that seeds events’ call for the possibility for resilience and resistance. Third, we papers, posted programs, and have included here and there some questions to foster summary reports your own reflections. Perhaps you’d like to use the on the Project [Website.](#) booklet in a reading group, workshop, or as a means to

expand on the observations and analysis we developed here—please feel invited to continue the conversation.

3.

For literature on archive access and specialized users please see: Mrinalini Luthra and Charles Jeurgens, "Humanising Digital Archival Practice. Access to Archives Guided by Social Justice" in *Intentional Invisibilization in Modern Asian History: Concealing and Self-Concealed Agents* Vol. 16 Dependency and Slavery Studies, ed. Mònica Ginés-Blasi (De Gruyter, 2025), 161–196.

A key prompt to our research has been the observation that archives and collections have a wide variety of users and are under pressure to grant more access to these diverse actors. While much has been written and considered with respect to the general public and special interest groups who visit and consult archives, there is a blindspot for the 'user' group of artists who may wish to deeply engage with material in the collections and even create an intervention in them.³ Our research sets out to understand: How do artists engage with and even participate in the creation and maintenance of archives? How are collections made accessible to them in particular, anticipating and accommodating their needs? At the same time, since the 1990s many curators and art historians have noted that contemporary art has undergone an archival turn.⁴ This, by now long-standing, 'archival art' genre includes a more recent surge in queer and trans artists creating what we suggest calling "artchival objects," or archivally-based artistic projects. Like archivists, artists working with historical materials grapple with questions of ownership and preservation of historical evidence; they too address neglected intersectional identities with a specialized remit to consider the categories of gender and sexualities.

4.
Our guiding research questions have been:

How do artists concerned with queer and trans pasts preserve and activate archival materials such as records, accounts, audio and visual documentation? Why might archives be interested in and support their critical and creative work?

See Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (2004): 3–22; Yann Chateigné and Markus Miessen, eds. *The Archive as a Productive Space of Conflict* (Sternberg Press, 2016); Sarah Callahan, *Art+Archive* (Manchester University Press, 2022); Ernst van Alphen, ed., *Productive Archiving. Artistic Strategies, Future Memories and Fluid Identities* (Valiz, 2024).

Artists can bring into archival settings, work, and research a particular set of skills, such as expertise in form, colour, abstraction, conceptualisation, as well as expertise and insight derived from lived experience that they then apply to questions that are already at the heart of many discussions in contemporary archives. These include: What is being preserved and who gets silenced? What do archival artefacts call for, and how can we make their histories come alive again? Artistic practices can not only point to new perspectives on such questions, but also make them tangible in different sensory dimensions. While we will focus on the questions and frictions that emerge in the daily practices of cultural workers – specifically, artists and archivists – gathering in and around archives and collections in the wider European sphere, we hope that our case studies will be useful to contexts much further afield. To try to represent differences in the political and social contexts for building trans and queer archives across the UK and continental Europe we have

5. included field note reflections and resources from people active in England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Croatia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Austria, and Switzerland. With multiple cases from these countries, they represent the most dense nodes of our research network.⁵ By gathering examples of artists collaborating to greater and lesser extents with archives our goal has been to demonstrate the variety and the pervasiveness of this under-discussed activity occurring at the intersection of contemporary art/archives/public history/heritage-making. Our ultimate aim is to encourage further research into the role of artists in building historical collections, and their added value to the cultural heritage sector.

Despite not being explicitly featured in the field notes, we also want to bring attention to few other relevant archives and artists who presented at Perverse Collections events and thereby informed our research questions, such as the long-standing Háttér Society in Budapest Hungary, the newly founded Albanian HomeSpace, Ukrainian queer artist Anton Shebetko, and the Belgian "His/Her/Their Stories" project. While the different socio-political contexts across Europe exceed the scope of this study, these interlocutors have helped us to gather a better understanding of how many archives move in and react to very different problems, pressures, and environments.

While we refrain from making direct policy recommendations, we encourage policy development in this area by those at cultural heritage regulatory bodies and institutions who are involved in collections, conservation, education, programming, exhibition, personnel, and partnerships. They are best placed to understand how policy needs to be tailored to the capacities and mission of the organization. A key issue that we have identified is that the mutual interest in forming a 'partnership' or a 'collaboration' between artists and archives suggests a high level of coordination, including the alignment of goals and values. However, the full extent of the goals and values are rarely explicitly stated, with the result that different parties might even be at odds with one another. Thus, we offer our provisional guidance via the use of instructional vignettes that showcase the challenges that one might encounter while forming a collaboration. We highlight the friction points—points of pleasure and pain—as a means to signal where better communication is needed between parties. However, even though we have included reference to more than twenty cases, we cannot have anticipated every situation, conflict, or opportunity. Each institution and group would need to think through their own personnel capacities, interests, and (infra)structures to formulate internal guidelines. We strongly suggest that any guidelines should receive feedback and input from artistic partners so that their needs are represented and fully accounted for. In the final section, you will discover a loose, adaptable framework for an agreement in the form of a care rider that may serve as a starting point for your in-person discussions as well as written policies and agreements.

TERMS AND FRAMEWORKS

In our field notes, we are as concerned with tangible cultural forms and materials as with the intangible expressions of experience, value, meaning, and feeling. Consider how the Faro Convention, agreed to by The Council of Europe, recognises that:

Objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. Instead, they are important because

6. The Council of Europe's website has a Culture and Cultural Heritage Section on Standards where information on and the full document of the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005) can be found.

of what people attach to them, the values they represent, and the way in which these can be understood and transmitted to other people.⁶

Archives and museums are the predominant forms of cultural heritage organizations that serve to collect and preserve the objects, and in

the best case scenario also retain information about the value systems and narratives that adhere to them. We adopt an expansive conception of 'archives,' with the term understood to refer to a diverse spread of collections: manifold forms include specialized physical sites and home kitchen drawers. In this way, we follow our Perverse Collections project's approach to archives, being informed by theoretical positions articulated by Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Carolyn Steedman amongst others.⁷ For Steedman, the archive is "a name for the many places in which the past [...] has deposited some traces or fragments."⁸ For Derrida, as he writes "The Space of Memory: In an Archive" in his polemical *Archive Fever*, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory."⁹ In line with this idea, our research into the role of artists in

archives prioritises the ethical and political significance of the under-pressure subaltern archive centred on queer and trans lives, specifically within the scope of European archives and collections. We therefore highlight the role such collections of precious materials and their artistic mobilizations play in both creating and opening up a repository of minoritarian memories. Yet, minoritarian memory work

9. can also take place inside of institutions that receive state funding, and even represent national interests. Thus we also look into how queer and trans collections function within larger metropolitan, regional, or nation-state heritage institutions that follow other organizational logics.

Queer and trans archives and museums work to mitigate the erasure from or harmful representation of minority lives in the historical

7. First published as *L'Archéologie du savoir*, 1969, see Michael Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, 2002).

8. Carolyn Steedman, "The Space of Memory: In an Archive" in his polemical *Archive Fever*, "There is no political power without control of the Sciences 11, no. 4, (1998), 65-83, 67.

9. First published as *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne*, in 1995, see Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 4.

record. There is always the potential that such community, activist, or even institutional archives could be erased in their own right. With the widespread rise over the last decade of right-wing populism in many European countries, Scandinavia, and the UK, queer and trans archives are facing increased prejudicial attacks, censorship, and cuts in funding.

When the lives of queer and trans people are being vilified by some politicians through misinformation campaigns, how can LGBTQ+ archives effectively counter such condemnation, and argue for their own necessity, value, and preservation? We suggest that artists play a key role here in the countering of disinformation campaigns by re-activating and disseminating further the archival record's evidence of existence.

The artist embodies a living link to the site of archival preservation, meaning that they enter the site with their unique socio-cultural points of (dis)connections that may register with materials forming new links of dissent, cross-contamination, and challenges to the evidential record. Following British queer multi-disciplinary artist George Chakravarthi's talk at the Queer Heritage and Collections Network UK 2024 Symposium, museum scholar Richard Sandell asked the question, "What skills can artists and art bring to the museum?"¹⁰

With reference to nominally queer and to state collections, Chakravarthi said that "queer artists bring in many histories," and "often engage

11. on an emotional register as well as an intellectual one," with expressions of anger, sadness, joy and anger that

see minutes 33.27-34.00. can disrupt the status quo of the collections exhibited or objects in depots

12. and stacks.¹¹ Queer artists can act as well as disruptors of "the history of how we perceive certain things," and even change the people that they work with in the institution.¹² In sum: "Queer artists bring a heartbeat to large cold spaces."¹³ Through their heated engagement they disrupt the controlled temperature, but moreover, by creating

This discussion took place on October 22, 2025

at the Queer Heritage and Collections Network UK 2024 Symposium, held at the Clore Learning Centre of Kensington Palace (London, England).

The exchange can be found at minute 33.15, viewable through embedded

YouTube video.

33.03 and 34.58.

13. Ibid. see minutes 33.30.

a new aesthetic experience of the art, artifacts, and documents they enliven materials by moving them into new arenas and bestowing them with a new life. There is something perverse in reanimating materials and something counter-normative in challenging a set interpretation of materials or in surfacing stories that have been submerged.

In contrast to national archives and collections that carry histories with great authority, LGBTQ+ archives and collections have usually begun as personal or community projects, characterised by their independence, informality, and unruliness.¹⁴ Queer and trans people have historically been sceptical about official archives, libraries, and museums, due in part to their propensity to hide the lives of minority identities from view, or reduce them to coded and ghostly traces. LGBTQ+ people have thus unsurprisingly often

14. clung on to their own collections of artefacts, the material traces of their experience and worlds, reluctant to hand them over to any larger holding. These collections can usefully be understood as 'counterarchives,' a term which (in Tim Dean's *Archival Activism, Symbolic Annihilation, and the LGBTQ2+ Community Archive*," *Archivaria* 89 (2020): 6-33. Relevant as well words) refers "less to a determinate place or

15. archival content than to a strategic practice," *Legs Wide Open: A Whore's Ride Through History*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Schwules Museum, 2024), March 26–November 11, 2024. Another

knowledge established in and through official archives."¹⁵ Artists might be especially attracted to working with these more loosely assembled materials

It is worth noting that the history of sex worker activism is closely entangled with trans activism, yet is often excluded from or obscured in LGBTQIA+ archival collections. For an intersectional reading methodology across specialized archives see Eliza Steinbock and Wigbertson Julian Isenia, "How to Read Dr Betty Paerl's Whip: Intersectional Visions of Trans/Gender, Sex Worker, and Decolonial Activism in the Archive," *Feminist Review* 132 (2022): 24-45.

11. Counterarchival art then can become new assemblages of hisorical findings that artists set into motion to meet and greet contemporary

communities far from the official sited archival spaces. According to archivist scholar Michelle Caswell, community and cultural (counter)archives can transform into becoming 'urgent' for people in the present period. This occurs when users (and we add artists) locate historical materials in order to catalyze present-day minoritized social movements.¹⁶ She describes how community users of (counter)

16. Michelle Caswell, *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work* (Routledge, 2021).
archives activate records that document social movement struggles (such as against racism, sexism, xenophobia, transphobia) from a previous

moment in time in order to identify possible tactics to tackle similar current-day oppression.¹⁷ Moreover, activated materials from an urgent archive can inspire us by feeling connected across time to a lineage, and help us become open to receiving motivating messages from our fore-elders that we need to carry on in the struggle. As community users, artists bring special skills to representing these continuities in the fight against demeaning representation and erasure in a culture. Artists rooted in social change activism can activate and redisperse these records that demonstrate precedence, that is,

showing that we have been here before and we fought it then as we will now. Such empowering messages from urgent archives can take the form of artworks, graphic design, photography, film, installation, exhibitions, or public history projects.

ACTIONS, SKILLS, AND CAPACITIES ARTISTS BRING TO ARCHIVAL ACTIVISM

To counter the overrepresentation of heteronormative perspectives in heritage spaces, networks dedicated to 'queering collections' have advocated for improving the visibility and amount of queer art and

artefacts held in archives and collections.¹⁸ Based in the Netherlands, the Queering the Collections Network (2014-present) started up shortly after hosting the 2012 LGBTI

ALMS Conference on "The Future of LGBTI Histories." The more than fifty members of the network organized in person and online information meetings as well as national and international symposia. Important open access publications have been produced by network members, including the English-language *Guide: Queering the Collections* (2023).¹⁹ The Queer Heritage and Collections Network in the UK has been organizing annual meetings since 2021 and

attracted a wide range of partners to band together. Their website has excellent downloadable resources for all needs, from Dan Vo's *LGBTQ+ Good Practice Guide: Ten Easy Steps for More Inclusive Programming* (2020) to Kris Reid and Richard Sandell's *Academic Literature Review* (2021).²⁰ Within and beyond these networks, globally many initiatives have sprung up to carry out 'heritagization' processes

See the Resource page here.

19. See the Open Access publications: Riemer Knoop and Lonneke van den Hoonaard, eds., *Queering the Collections: Tips & Tricks voor het nog zichtbaarder maken van gender- & seksuele diversiteit in musea en collecties* (HLIA: LGBTI Heritage and the Reinwardt Academie 2016); Wigbertson Julian Isenia, Rachael Agnes Moore, STUDIO i, eds., *Baseline. Een nulmeting van queerness in Nederlandse musea* (Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven: Studio-i platform voor inclusieve cultuur, 2020); Jindra Maes, *Guide Queering the Collections* (IHLIA LGBT Heritage in cooperation with BHIC, 2023).

20. Queering (and transing) actions require care and consideration and benefit from multiple perspectives. It matters who does the research into what is there and what is missing as they bring different methods, sensibilities, and conceptual frameworks. We venture that artists have an important role to play here in attributing cultural and social value to queer and trans related materials and critically engaging with representation politics.

18.

The six international gatherings organized as the LGBTQ+ Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections (ALMS) Conference (2006-2019) have been crucial to galvanizing the field. Artists have also long been involved in the organization, presented work, and attended. See for instance the international board for the 2019 Berlin conference on "Queering Memory".

20.

See the Resource page here.

21.

Heritagization is the process of transforming elements of the past—such as objects, places, or practices—into recognized cultural heritage that is valued, preserved, and often used for present-day social, cultural, or economic purposes. See Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (Routledge, 2013). Of note is the highly active group within ICOM Italia, called Gruppo di Lavoro – Genere e Diritti LGBTQ+.

Indeed, artists bring in:

- (1) A temporary outside perspective through their lived experience (not usually present in the archival or museum team) and by not being fully part of the hierarchies in the archival, curatorial, or collections conservation work;
- (2) Expertise in form, colour, poetic language, performance and other artistic trainings; expertise with developing interdisciplinary theoretical concepts through artistic research; critical capacity to locate blind spots and find alternative ways to represent ephemeral situations; relatedly they create embodied aesthetic experiences that can counter archival stillness, coldness, and dryness;
- (3) Networks beyond the archival realm and usually an interest in showcasing materials that can affect (even improve) their status; when archival traces are shown in new spaces (e.g. art centers, galleries, and in public) and to new audiences, that might assist in popularizing LGBTQ+ histories;
- (4) Energy and interests, and possibly also funded time to pick up on archival research and activation where archives and museums themselves have no resources or motivated internal staff members.

By following how artists as special interest users engage with archival records and collections, with objects and places, we can gain insight into the practice of value-attribution and transmission that lies at the heart of heritage-making. Our field reporting will detail some of the fusions and frictions that occur between LGBTQ+ (counter)archives; collections held in municipal, regional, and state museums; and a variety of artistic collaborators. The instructive vignettes introduced in the next section inventory a range of artistic participation forms. As micro-studies, they demonstrate how artistic materials and interventions, generated

through weak and strong collaborations, have contributed to broader strategic agendas of diversifying historical knowledge of marginalized lives. In this way, our field notes aim to show the expansive role artists can play in creating, preserving, activating, and generating wider awareness of queer, trans, and other subaltern lives and experiences.

INSTRUCTIVE VIGNETTES ABOUT HOW ARTISTS PARTICIPATE IN ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

In this section, we expand on several studies we have conducted of artistic participation in archives and collections. How does it actually work out when artists get involved in archives? And what are the pitfalls and promises that emerge and need to be negotiated? In our exploration of these queries, we draw on our conversations with artists, community organisers, and archivists as well as observations and field visits to different queer and trans archives. We identified five main types of interaction that organize the following five instructive vignettes: independent artistic research, collaborations between artists and archives, community/solo residencies, building new collections, and developing existing archives.

In our research, we observed different issues and trade-offs that characterise each of these interactions. Illuminating their respective opportunities and tensions strikes us as productive in terms of reflecting on what mutual care between the different agents can look like. Furthermore, we switch between the perspectives of the archive and the critical visitors that it attracts. In this regard, we aim to point to

22. Sam Bourcier, *Le pouls de l'archive, c'est en nous qu'il bat* (Cambourakis, 2025) the attempts from both sides to make the archive's "pulse beat again," to recall the title of Sam Bourcier's 2025 monograph.²² Similar to Chakravarthi's quote above, Bourcier highlights the disruptive power

that an emotional register brings to the archive.²³ But he also points to the many different forms of hybrid engagement and roles that emerge when outsiders are invited in to take part in the archival laboratory and temporarily share the responsibility and problems of the archivist. Here, the softened borders between inside and outside get fuzzy and, we believe, become charged with potential. In a similar vein, we aim to go beyond the established binary of the presumably dead institutional archive vs. the figure of a revitalising outside visitor in order to gain a better understanding of the different agents and diverse forms of blended roles that shape today's archival landscape.

²³ As Ann Cvetkovich famously argues, emotions are disruptive and important precisely because they are difficult to fit into traditional archives and official stories. See Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Duke University Press, 2003).

Building Trust and Belonging: Artistic Research in Institutional Queer Collections

²⁴ As Europe's largest queer archive with an international purview, In IHLIA LGBT Heritage in Amsterdam has attracted numerous October 2024, the artists over the past few years who have researched

PERCOL project funded exhibition and engaged with its unique collection.²⁴ curated by Sandro Weilenmann, titled "Blooming Archive," showcased seven contemporary artists who have engaged with the collection in the past five years. See Sandro Weilenmann, *Blooming Archive*, exh. catalogue, OBA Amsterdam (IHLIA LGBTI, 2024).

The archive serves as a good case for how artistic research is conducted at a community archive, reflecting the

increasing turn to archives from a creative

as well as theoretical perspective.²⁵ The archive is housed in the Amsterdam Public Library at their central city Oosterdok location, where it occupies

office rooms and part of the underground depot, while also featuring a publicly accessible library and exhibi-

tion space. Over the past two decades, IHLIA has grown into a large public institution with professional staff and facilities. IHLIA does not have a formal artist-in-residency program, yet the organization's vast collection has become a dynamic site for

artists edging out their own spaces and defining new roles for themselves. Notably, artists such as Pablo Lerma or Tabea Nixdorff have gone beyond researching the collection for a single project. Instead, they have independently built a more sustained trusting relationship with the archive, where they have repeatedly returned to it over multiple years for different works. What can we learn from these instances of artists expressing belonging in an archive and their specific interventions?

Lerma, who is based in Amsterdam, first visited IHLIA in 2020 for his project *It does not stop at images* (2020–).²⁶ The piece was com-

posed of visual image panels revolving around

Pablo Lerma website. photographs featured in gay and lesbian magazines from the 1970s to 1990s, such as the *San Francisco Sentinel*, the Dutch *Homologie*, or *Lambda* from Barcelona. Lerma had already worked with different archival collections and formed an artistic practice around photographic and textual reimageries of queer heritage. He set out to explore every issue of the three magazines stored at IHLIA, which meant that he launched a time-consuming process with many hours spent in the archive over the span



Pablo
Lerma, It
does not stop
at images
(Homologie &
San Francisco
Sentinel, Gay List),
2019–ongoing.

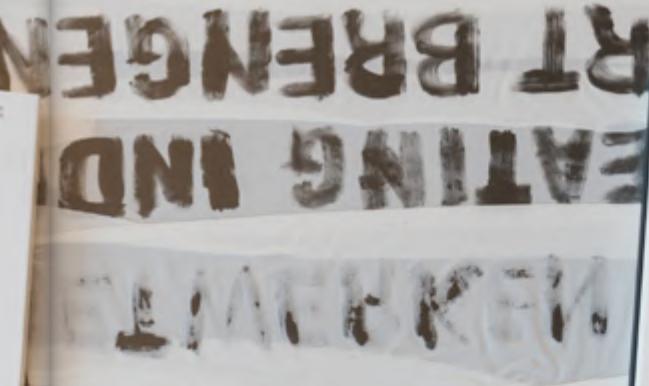
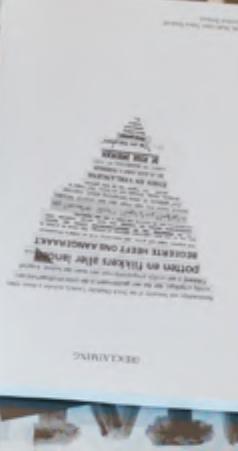
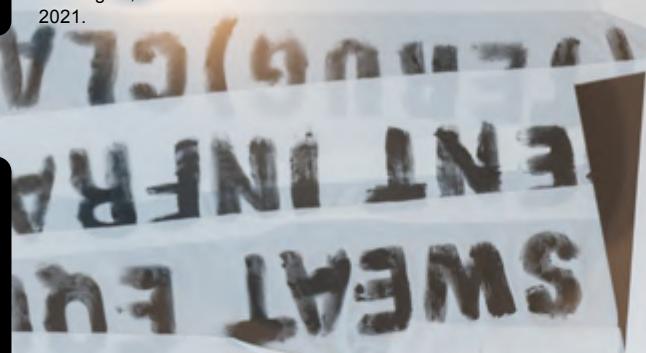
of several weeks. He noted how he managed to secure the required access by showing a genuine interest in the archive, its history, and its mission. Significantly, he felt disappointment during the initial visits as he did not see himself reflected in the collection. Instead, he perceived the materials to reproduce exclusionary stereotypes of white and idealized athletic bodies. In response, he decided to further examine different archival collections while trying to understand IHLIA's collection and its profile as a whole. In addition, he engaged in numerous conversations with the curators about collecting and archiving practices, their potential exclusions, and blind spots. This process of making sense of a collection more broadly enabled the artist to render the archive productive for his practice and connect his personal experience and embodied knowledge to the archive. He conceived *It does not stop at images* (2020–) as a collage of pictures from magazines that were geographically tied to his biography. Furthermore, Lerma reconfigured images according to personal categories such as joy, affection, or tenderness, which he describes as lacking in his early exposure to queerness. Lerma has since repeatedly returned to IHLIA for other projects, such as his reworking of the Gerrit Jan Vos collection of images of military men during the Second World War.

27. In a comparable way, Nixdorff has engaged with IHLIA's collection on multiple occasions.²⁷ The artist, whose practice focuses on language-based and publishing projects, conceived the installation work *Feminist Design Strategies* (2021) in collaboration with the architect and researcher Setareh Noorani at the Dutch Nieuwe Instituut.²⁸ The piece consisted of a vast array of archival material related to feminist urban planning, design, literature, and architecture, pulled from IHLIA and other collections such as Atria:

29. *from HILIA and other collections such as Atria.*
Atria – Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History website. Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History.²⁹ Inspired by weaving looms, the installation interlaced archival texts, images, and pamphlets between strings attached to large wooden frames, thus visualizing the mutual entanglement between these artefacts as part of a larger



Tabea Nixdorff,
Feminist Design
Strategies,
2021.



30. cultural tapestry. Moreover, in 2023, Nixdorff conceived of a
 Four books publication series titled *Archival Textures*, which focuses
 have appeared in the series: on underrepresented perspectives in European queer
 Tabea Nixdorff and Setareh Noorani eds., archives such as Black lesbian activism.³⁰ Working
 No. 1 *Amplifying (Archival Textures*, 2024); Tabea Nixdorff and Noah Littel, eds., No. 2 *(Re)Claiming (Archival Textures*, 2024); Tabea Nixdorff established contacts with older genera- and Carolina Valente Pinto, eds., No. 3 *Posting (Archival Textures*, 2024); Tabea Nixdorff, Tamara Hartman, Mirelle van Tulder, and Ans Sarianamual, eds., *Republishing: Umoja Zwarte Vrouwenkrant* (Archival Textures, 2024). bringing archival materials back into touch with

the subjects and communities that created them makes these artefacts more nuanced and rich, and thereby counters the simplification or romanticisation of a previous generation. In this regard, the artist's role is not only to circulate materials outside of the archive, such as with the publications series, but also to mediate and connect. Archives can benefit from this intermediary function of the artist, specifically regarding underrepresented communities who perceive many LGBTQ+ archives as predominantly white and cis- male domains.

Both Nixdorff and Lerma have succeeded in establishing working relationships with larger institutional archives that extend from researching an existing collection to engaging with the people tied to these collections. For the two, creating friendly and professional connections with staff has facilitated greater access to the collection. Informing their respective practices, this process of building trust is a key component to working with archival holdings. Establishing credibility with an archive can be more difficult for those not working with the more orthodox methods of academic research. Artists have given accounts of feeling that they had to prove their seriousness before being able to conduct their creative explorations of archives. For many of them, building rapport is a part of their artistic labour. Asked for advice on which strategies they have found most productive in establishing these trusting relationships, the following points have recurred frequently:

- (1) Physically visit the archive, take time to get to know staff, in particular the archivist, and be open to the different expertise they can offer, despite the various approaches they might have.
- (2) Be transparent about your intentions.
- (3) Contacting the people who have donated the materials is very helpful to learning more context.
- (4) Make sure to take responsibility towards other people connected to the archival materials, whose subjectivities might be endangered (i.e. consider how, why and where you might make things (more) public)
- (5) Be aware of the before-during-and after process: Conducting prior research before approaching an archive, defining how to contribute to the archive, communicating your potential needs, thinking about how generated research can be distributed and accessed.

However, for some artists, the first contact with the archive is the experience of hitting a wall. For instance, one Swiss artist reported that their attempt to access the local *Kreis* (circle) archive for research was rejected, which they credited to their status as a 'mere' BA fine

31. arts student. In smaller, sparsely funded archives, the decision of granting access to collections often falls into the hands of volunteer archivists working with limited resources and without set protocols of who can enter the archive and how long they are allowed to stay. The artist's expertise, archival fluency, education, and/or public profile can thus influence the degree of hospitality an archive decides to offer. Wilfred van Buuren, the head of collection at IHLIA, recently reflected on the problem of access in a talk

on the occasion of PERCOL's *My Evidence* conference.³¹ Van Buuren stated that they aim to treat every artist who wishes to access

the collection the same, regardless of their name recognition or educational status. However, he also pointed out how, in practice, access is not granted to everybody in the same way. Some artists, with whom a relationship of trust can be established, have gotten almost full access to the vault where they could conduct research unsupervised. Other artists – van Buuren mentioned the example of an artist who appeared to be in haste and was demanding of the staff's time – only received limited access to the collection. Again, it is vital to foster strong rapport with archivists and understand their expertise, tasks and limitations in order to avoid rejection or restrictions.

Some archives are habituated to receiving artistic researchers, and reportedly even actively guide artists to holdings that they think might be particularly relevant to them. Other institutions are less experienced at engaging with artists, and their requests might trigger more general internal discussions about an archive's openness, processes, and general orientation. In consequence, with each archive, artists have to figure out what degree of access is potentially available to them and what sort of approach, dare we say, strategy of seduction, will be most fruitful. This idea of relationality, of course, presumes the archivist's interest in their queer and trans histories. As has been reported to us, predominantly heteronormative archives can, on the one hand, be forthcoming about sharing materials related to queer and trans lives. On the other hand, such archives and collections can be difficult to get interested in these histories in the first place and may be unable to provide the necessary support and expertise.

Yet rejection or estrangement from the archive can not only happen during the initial point of contact and in the relationship to the archivist, but also processually and partially during an artist's encounter with the archival materials themselves. The artist Lucas

32. Odahara, who is based in São Paulo and Berlin, described the feeling

[Lucas Odahara website](#)
Odarodle – An imaginary their
story of naturepeoples, 1535–
2017 at Schwules museum.

of initial estrangement from working with the Schwules Museum in Berlin for the exhibition project titled "Odarodle" in 2017.³² Odahara received an invitation from the guest curator, Ashkan

Sepahvand, who conceived an exhibition concept focussed on rereading the museum's collection from a postcolonial perspective. Although he did not approach the archive with the intention of finding himself represented, he describes the strong impression of not seeing himself reflected in the largely German collection which was established and shaped by white and gay cis-men. Odahara subsequently started to work with the archival holdings surrounding the story of the first indigenous gay martyr of Brazil, Tibira do Maranhão, who was tortured and executed for his sexual orientation in the seventeenth century. The artist's research, drawing on the marginalised and silenced status of colonised subjectivities, resulted in an installation piece consisting of painted ceramic tiles mounted on a wooden structure, titled *Os sons deles ecoando entre eu e você* (Their sounds echoing between you and me). The pieces depicted scenes of Tibira's ordeal in combination with drawings of the Brazilian landscape, thus making visible the colonial violence that still weaves through European queer archives. In an email exchange, Odahara cautioned against the limitations of artists being invited or commissioned to work with archives. Such funding schemes typically demand of the artist to again and again speak in relation to and validate the materials and discourses that are predetermined by the stewards of the archive and their engrained privileges. In consequence, the circular dynamics of such archives of power can confine the artist's ability and creativity to reflect and question and develop new strategies and approaches.

Moreover, archival rejection emanates not only from the representative lack of different viewpoints and materials, but also from the absence of appropriate filters and classifications in catalogue systems which could make LGBTQ+ content visible and searchable. In 2023, the artist and curator Andrée Ospina completed a three-week-long collection residency in the Centre des livres d'artistes (CDLA) in the French town of Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche. The center for artist books regularly hosts artists, scholars, and writers who are invited to engage with its collection in



Lucas Odahara,
Os sons deles ecoando
entre eu e você, 2017.

Andrée
Ospina, Les femmes
et les LGBTQIA+ sont-ils
caché·es entre les pages
des livres?, 2024.



Les femmes et les LGBTQIA+ sont-iels cachées entre les pages des livres ?



the framework of a short residency program. Ospina's research question addressed how and where female and queer perspectives are nestled in the particular medium of artist editions.³³ However, like most contemporary art collections, the collection's focus is predominantly white, heteronormative, and phal-³³ logocentric. The CDLA catalogue does not use thematic keywords and therefore does not include LGBTQ+ categories, instead preferring to highlight the books' formal and material aspects. Furthermore, although available to provide information and assistance, the team did not seem to share or be particularly invested in her line of inquiry. Consequently, Ospina pivoted to alternative search and support strategies, such as contacting friends and posting stories on Instagram. Subsequently, she conceived the exhibition project titled "Les femmes et les LGBTQIA+ sont-iels cachées entre les pages des livres?" (Are women and LGBTQIA+ people hidden between the book pages?) at the center, for which she arranged a personal selection of books, pamphlets, magazines and other printed materials in vitrines and on wooden walls. Facing the absence of a clearly identifiable queer, non-white, and female collection, Ospina turned to the subjective and relational as an ordering principle. She chose two axes for the exhibition: emotional as well as professional relations between female and queer individuals highlighted by placing one book next to another in the vitrines as well as additional maps, visualising subjective and thematic links. The resulting clusters of different materials and sources suggested a network and potential crossgenerational conversations between different artists, graphic designers, and activists. At the same time, the installation made visible the unresolved gaps in the collection and lack of verifiable knowledge about such connections.

Similar to Odahara, Ospina's practice puts pressure on the archive and its collection by making visible its gaps and omissions. Both of their interventions aim to do more than just illuminate hidden archival treasures and artefacts. Rather,

Ospina is the creator of the travelling library project *lesBiBiQueer* (collection BBQ, 2021). See the [Instagram account](#).

they actively reflect on the systems and problems that emerge when collections are not constructed through diverse and specific socio-political filters that would allow other types of experiences to be highlighted. What is more, both artists maintain a critical distance to the archive as they stress the evaluation of their own roles and agency. Pointing to the problems of assimilation and pinkwashing, they shed light on another aspect of the prior discussion of trustbuilding as a key exercise of artistic participation in the archive. Trust and the temporary integration into the archive become thematised as an ambivalent dynamic, where the artist is careful not to be absorbed into the established mechanisms of an institution, instead remaining conscious of the threshold of the archive and the potential of disruption. In this regard, the archival artist can come to the archive as both facilitator/challenger, apprentice/advisor, and seeker/giver. The latent synchronicity and hovering between these roles can be highly productive to archives, as it asks of them to repeatedly return to the fundamental questions of institutional heritage making. Namely, the questions of who is represented and how they appear, who has access to the archive, and who can contribute to it.

2

Missed Encounters:
Communication between Artist and Archive

Despite these advantages of artists being involved in queering collections, in our tracking of this engagement we found one major pitfall. Sometimes communication glitches are due to artists not “speaking the language of the archive,” in the sense of knowing its organizing grammar and successfully navigating its institutional logics, to refer to K.J. Rawson’s study of accessing trans and queer archives.³⁴ Like

34. ships in the night, artists and archivists
K. J. Rawson, “Accessing Transgender regularly lose sight of each other in
// Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics,”
Archivaria 68 (2010): 123-40.

their respective journeys through the archive. In this section we will discuss how and where communication can break down, leading to a lack of reciprocal exchange and missed encounters. Artists may not know metadata search terms or realize how copyright applies to historical materials. Similarly, archivists might not be familiar with artistic research methods and sensibilities or have not yet had time to create finding aids. They may not be used to assist with open-ended questions or realize where archival materials travel once they become part of artistic works. Lacking a common language can cause confusion about what each party wants and needs from each other. We would also emphasize that it is a missed opportunity to not document artistic research from the archive’s perspective. This might occur because the artist fails to communicate their findings and use of materials back to the archive or because the archive fails to be interested in keeping track of these kinds of projects or in preserving such artistic documentation. We will refer to a number of experiences that we anonymized to generalize the problems experienced but we do mention specific institutions when it seems important.

In our conversations with different artists, the accessibility of information has repeatedly emerged as a key issue. While some artists are already searching for specific objects or histories when they initially approach the archive, more frequently, their first objective is to understand what is actually *in* the archive. In this regard, digitised catalogues and inventories are a key resource for artists trying to gain knowledge about not only what historic content is stored in the vaults, but also their specific medium. For instance, an artist who mainly works with visual material in their practices will be interested to learn if a specific collection predominantly contains pamphlets

and letters or photography. Yet not every archive can easily offer this information. While established collections, such as IHLIA, list more material details about individual holdings, others often struggle to provide such an inventory. The main reason for this is that many queer and trans archives, often relying on volunteer work, only have a rough overview of what is in each folder, box, or cabinet. For instance, archives such as *Mémoire des Sexualités* in Marseille or Queer Britain in London have stated that only between 15-25% of their collections are fully inventoried.

Against this background, it is frequently more convenient for archivists to respond to requests for access to specific and already identified material with clearly delineated research questions, rather than supervising a visitor to explore different boxes across many collections in a more haphazard way. The latter can be more time-consuming, and it is not always clear how the knowledge generated through serendipity benefits the archive. In turn, artists, whose practices are more exploratory and process-oriented, might perceive the archive as an at best semi-accessible space that not only privileges academic inquiry, but is also meant to be a space exclusively for scholars. This perception is particularly relevant for queer and trans archives that function under the umbrella of academic institutions such as university libraries. One example is Skeivt arkiv, the Norwegian national archive for queer and trans history. Established in 2015, the archive is housed at the University Library in Bergen. Skeivt arkiv is led by a team of academics and trained librarians; it contains different personal and organisational archives, journals, and books, as well as an oral history project and its virtual encyclopedia featuring persons, events, and organisations. There are evident benefits for a queer history project to belong to a larger organisation, such as access to expertise, resources, security, and the prestige associated with larger institutions. On the flip-side, such an association reinforces the rarified sphere of the archive, and artists have reported that they feel their lack of traditional academic credentials hinders their engagement with the collection. Indeed, some archives might



Oscar
Eriksson
Furunes,
red, 2023.



not actually be that interested in working with artists and prioritize more traditional forms of archive building over creative encounters.

Inadvertently or intentionally, an archivist's work and interaction with the artist can help shape the resulting artworks. For instance, when the artist Oscar Eriksson Furunes inquired with IHLIA to use a series of photographs by Gon Buurman, a prominent activist lesbian photographer in the second half of the twentieth century, he received digital copies in relatively low quality.³⁵ Requests for high definition resolutions went unanswered. In turn, the artist became interested in the graininess and blurriness of the images, which led to his series of manipulated photographs titled *red* (2023). Another example of how communication between archivist and artist can become generative for the work's creation is the film director and scholar Jyoti Mistry, who spent a longer research residency at the EYE Filmmuseum in Amsterdam, researching their collection from a postcolonial and non-heteronormative perspective. Based on her research visit, Mistry conceived the 18-minute-long short film *Loving in Between* (2023), featuring a vast array of archival footage. Mistry stated that one of the key elements for the piece, namely the footage of a performance of the 1928 Foxtrot hit song "Diga Diga Doo," emerged not from her archival discovery, but was rather sent to her two weeks after her last visit to the collection. The archivist shared the file with her as she thought the artist might be interested in the material, providing Mistry by chance with

what would become a key element of the film. Beyond the archivist then, both instances evidence how the archive material's agency seeps into artistic processes and becomes reflected through them. Consequently, the archive does not simply store and safeguard cultural heritage, but becomes a co-producer of artistic transformations and collection dissemination.

Almost no European archive in our research systematically archives artistic projects or inquiries from artists into their collections. In spite of the sustained interest in researching

and participating, as well as the richness of different forms of interventions that artists build in this process, their engagement remains

sparsely documented and prone to being forgotten. Consequently, it is difficult to track artistic archival activations. Attempts to reconstruct traces of artists in the archive often depend on an archivist's individual memory. In a similar vein, the archive often does not know what happened with the artist's research, if it has led to the production of a work, and where such works might have travelled. When archives respond to queries from artists, often containing inquiries to receive digital files and copyright permissions, they frequently include a note asking artists to report back with their 'end product.' However, more often than not, artists fall short of responding to these calls. Frequently, self-employed artists do not perceive it as an urgent task to inform the donor archives of their works, and working with limited resources and under precarious economic circumstances, they might also not see the immediate benefits from such an inventory when it comes to increasing the visibility of their practices. In a similar vein, archives rarely follow up on their requests, in turn signalling to the artist that documenting their works and participation is not a priority concern. On the flipside, we have also encountered instances where archives were too insistent on the knowledge exchange between them and the visiting artist. One practitioner gave an account of an archive asking for the metadata, photo collections, and other information that emerged from the artist's individual research and the personal network that they had established with makers and authors. From the artist's perspective, the archive's demands suggested a lack of acknowledging and valuing the labour conducted by non-staff, and, consequently, left them feeling exploited.

2.49



Jyoti
Mistry,
Loving in
Between,
2023.

What appears to be needed for better communication and coordination between artists and the archive is a heightened attention to accessible information. More specifically, this regards how quickly artists can gain relevant information about the collection, how welcome they feel to engage hands-on with the archive's materials, and whether they feel that their professionalism is recognised. Additionally, a stronger communication protocol during and after the artistic research project would benefit the archive's knowledge about how their collection becomes transformed, travels, and further disseminates archival materials. This would

require a more proactive gathering of information about the end product of the artist's visits to the archive, such as follow-up emails and reporting, highlighting how and why this documentation could be featured in the archive and preserved for future visitors. In return, artists would need to cultivate a greater awareness of how they can support and give back to the archive by voluntarily sharing their results and thus enrich the collection.

Finally, considering the problem of exploitative dynamics pertaining to knowledge transfer, institutions could foster the habit of approaching artists as consultants. Tied to a more formal degree of recognition and remuneration, numerous practitioners that we have talked to would welcome the role of a consultant and feel their expertise more recognised.

Intentionality:

Navigating Residencies for Communities and Solo Artists

Cultural production in archives and collections is not limited to individual professional artists; it sometimes is conducted by larger collectives or groups. Aside from direct artist commissions, the organization of residency programs are the most formalized way for artists to interact with archives and collections. Of interest to us is the high level of stated intentionality that a museum or archive expresses: who is the residency for, what is the expected outcome, how are resident participants engaged, what materials and support are made available to them, and which roles are predefined or left open for artistic creation? Likewise, the artist may have intentions that are shared (or not) with the organization with regard to their expectations and goals. We focus on the communication of intentionality to continue thinking about the care involved in sustaining relationships between longer-term cultural workers in the archive and collection and the short-term cultural workers who are invited in and presumably are facilitated in their creative pursuit. Residencies are a means for museums and archives to engage with specific publics as a host and for artists to receive special treatment such as extended access and professional support far beyond what the typical visitor would experience. In this section we examine the community residency program hosted by Queer Britain and a number of self-initiated solo residency experiences of British Femme textile artist Sarah-Joy Ford to show how different sites and stakeholders can be navigated.

Queer Britain's Head of Programme and Collection, Jennifer Shearman, describes this national LGBTQ+ museum as a place where queer history is conceptualized through cultural producers. Founded in 2018 in London, England, Queer Britain's space on Granary Square near Kings Cross consists of offices, a workshop room, a gift shop, one room showcasing a small collection of donated and loaned items, a video-viewing nook, and a room dedicated to the temporary exhibitions such as the community residency.

Most holdings are on display in the collection room curated as “We are Queer Britain,” although some objects are held in a small storage area within their building. Some other items can be accessed through the special collections and archive of Bishopsgate Institute, located in Spitalfields about 30 minutes away. The relatively small room housing the evolving exhibition, “We Are Queer Britain,” marking the 50th anniversary of the UK’s first Pride March, manages to include an impressive array of materials. Their website description says, “It is a riot of voices, objects and images from the worlds of activism, art, culture and social history covering over 100 years of queer life.” Paintings, photography, and video works are displayed amidst artefacts, letters, and a quilt. Due to the restricted amount of space and being in the preparation phase for creating a collection management system, they currently are not able to actively collect on a large scale. In the interim of this pause in accepting artworks and objects, Shearman and her team moved forward with ways to continue involving the community in creating connections and a small amount of material that could be immediately displayed and eventually added to the collection.

Fulfilling these intentions was the launch of the community residence program in 2024 that consisted of hosting three residencies lasting three months each.³⁶ The program is intended as a means to include groups whose historical narrative suffers

^{36.} Detailed information about Queer Britain’s Community Residence Programmes can be found at their website subpages 1, 2, 3.

neglect, even within queer histories. They were formed by members of the respective communities: LGBTQ+ Traveller, Migrant Men+, and East and Southeast Asian. Each residency began with Queer Britain having contact with a partnering organization who already had people involved from these communities and could use their network to identify interested participants. Working as the programming and community events manager, Nan Dorrego Carreira coordinated the residencies, building on their previous experience running the Youth Program at the Wellcome Collection and their own artistic practice. While the residents often have a writing, performance, or visual arts practice, many do not self-identify as professional artists. Together with someone from the partnering organization, Dorrego Carreira guided the group in consulting the Queer Britain collection to learn about the materials and what is missing. In regularly



Queer
Britain
Community
Residency
LGBTQ+
Traveller+,
Collaging
Together,
2024.





scheduled sessions, they could use the studio and gallery spaces, and receive training from professional artists as the group worked towards creating a final work, e.g. a zine, performance, installation, or video. They then decided together how to exhibit their process and materials in the gallery. They also decided together with Dorrego Carreira and Shearman which and how the materials would be archived for preservation and future access.

The residencies developed a care protocol for their custodial and personal relationships. Dorrego Carreira and Shearman agreed that while “bureaucracy doesn’t help artists,” they did want to secure permissions from each participant for exhibiting and archiving the individual and collective output. Going through trial and error, eventually the permission form was written in plain language (avoiding legal jargon) and available online (rather than on paper). Dorrego Carreira opened each residency with a discussion on intentional and safer spaces, acknowledging how care and caring need to be built into each working session. They created an area for people to decompress in the studio, provided fidget toys, and always considered when breaks were needed, and what discussions might open wounds and trauma. Dorrego Carreira experienced their role as involving artistic, emotional, and institutional labor. Funneling the excitement of forming a group into a realistic shared creative endeavor (given the allotted time and resources available) was intensive but highly productive. The archived group artwork includes a tarot card deck, revised passports, and an elaborate shrine. The months-long intensive peer-to-peer artist sharing even led to the creation of new art collectives with the group members, which demonstrate the tight bonds that can be realized through such intentional care.

Queer Britain did not pay residency participants, deciding that the experience should be recreational and the output could be entirely up to the group. Paying a fee could signal that expectations were higher, or that the work needed to be channeled in a particular direction. It was fully voluntary in the sense that people

could decide to take part in person, online, stop or pause their participation. Queer Britain's partnering with an existing societal organization allowed for a plug and play mode for community-building. Other residencies might issue an open call for participants that outlines exactly what they can offer and the parameters for joining. In either case, even with the best of intentions from the cultural or historical organization, there is no guarantee of finding willing participants. As successful as the Queer Britain residencies have been for engaging communities through artistic means, they were also a response to the fact that funding for short term projects is more readily available than securing structural funding. The Community Residency Programme was made possible thanks to those who donated to their CrowdFund through Art Happens, and was supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Other ways that artists become engaged by Queer Britain is through the Madame F juried Art Award, selling their merchandise in the gift shop (badges, candles, tote bags, prints), and being hired as musicians and DJs at events like the Sounds Queer take-over of the music festival Summer Sounds (held in London's King's Cross).

Notably, compared to museum spaces, artist residencies in queer archives and heritage sites such as historic homes are rare, perhaps because these organizations tend to be underfunded and

37. One of Crichton's archivival projects involved her selection of 19 innovative LGBTQ artists, writers, and musicians, who were each paired with a deceased person whose personal artifacts are part of the archive. The results with vivid imagery are compiled in E.G. Crichton ed., *Matchmaking in the Archive: 19 Conversations with the dead and 3 Encounters with Ghosts* (Rutgers, 2023).

understaffed. One exceptional long-term position as artist-in-resident was held by the American lesbian artist scholar E.G. Crichton during 2008–2014 at San Francisco's GLBT Historical Society.³⁷ In Europe, the Schwules Museum Berlin regularly has guest curators for exhibitions who have an artistic background, as well as an extensive annual program of rotating solo and group shows (1984–present). In 2019 from January to December they collaborated with the KW Institute for Contemporary Art to host Renee Gladman as part of the KW residency format, "A

Year with..." (lasting 2017–2022). Our research has tracked the rising popularity of museums, archives, and heritage houses to invite artists to engage with their spaces and collections, yet we see that these invitations remain ad hoc. For example, Charleston House in Firle, England hosted Matthew Beach in 2017–18 in collaboration with the Diep ~ Haven Festival and commissioned Travis Albaiza in 2025 to write a new monologue play for the Charleston Festival.³⁸ Hence, an artist has to be lucky to find an available, financially supported residency at their preferred placement.

38. For more information on these residencies and their outcomes, see these two websites 1, 2.

Sarah-Joy Ford's practice-based PhD on lesbian pasts-presents-futures centred on archival

research and residencies at historic sites. Looking

closer into her process yields insights into how an artist can create the conditions that they desire for a longer term stay. In her 2022 PhD dissertation, "Quilting the lesbian archive: quilt making as an affective methodology for re-visioning the lesbian archive," Ford describes how her creative practice is driven by research in the institutional archive, the community archive, the domestic archive and by following the archival loop that shifts materials indefinitely between

39. categories.³⁹ With quilts, banners, scarves and other mate-

Sarah-Joy Ford website.

rial objects, her aim is to "establish the archive as an active/activist site for intergenerational intimacy

Sarah-Joy Ford,

and collaboration." Due to receiving PhD

archive: quilt making as an affective methodology for re-visioning the lesbian archive"

(PhD diss., Manchester

Metropolitan University, 2022).

partners through the AHRC partner placement

scheme from the North West Doctoral Training Center. She reached out to archival partners through her existing artist network, to offer herself as an in-house artist for free, who would carry out three months of research and create an artistic outcome. The partner would need to be capable of carrying the administrative burden of filing paperwork with the funder, and this hurdle narrowed down the possible residency to staffed archives and heritage sites.

Ford followed her lesbian network to suggest a residency at Plas Newydd Historic House in Llangollen, Wales – home in the late

40. 1700s-early 1800s to Lady Eleanor Butler, Sarah Information Ponsonby, and Mary Caryl.⁴⁰ She reached out to on the home can be found here: [Plas Newydd House and Garden | Wales | National Trust, on the funded project here: North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership | Plas Newydd.](#) Professor Alison Oram who had herself written about unofficial queer pilgrimages to heritage sites. Although Oram did not have a contact within current staff members, she introduced the artist to her friends Jane Hoy and Helen Sandler who co-direct "Aberration, Queer Tales from Wales" and regularly perform their theatre show "An Extraordinary Female Affection: The Life and Love of the Ladies of Llangollen."⁴¹

They connected her with the site manager and curator of the house, and became part of the collaboration. In addition to attracting more visitors with programming, curator Carly Davies at [Helen Sandlr website, Aberration about Aberration's Ladies of Llangollen show page website.](#) Plas Newydd was keen to have closer contact with the local St Collen's church, where the three Ladies of Llangollen are buried in a three sided monument. Ford initiated contact in stages to develop the parameters for the residency: the artistic focus, the time frame, access to materials, and additional local partners.

Ford previously had made a personal visit to Plas Newydd, a site for queer pilgrimage since the seventeenth century. She and her partner found the tour missed an opportunity to highlight the epic, transgressive love story; it even contained interpretation panels that discredited the women's relationship. During her residency, Ford's intention was to explore the hauntings of joy and connection that still resonate from the writings, embroidery, and sketchbooks left by the ladies of Llangollen, and from existing evidence of unofficial ceremonies held on the grounds in the intervening 150 years. While the house was closed to visitors in the winter months, the artist was given the large iron key to access the building and grounds for two weeks in January 2022. She eventually was able to make contact with the National Library of Wales to view Sarah Ponsonby's watercolors and architectural drawings. Additionally, she met with Father Lee Taylor, the local vicar, to develop a banner-making workshop for LGBTQ+ people and their friends, which attracted a large group to St Collen's community hall. The residency's final exhibition included a radical re-designing of the domestic textiles of the home including quilts, cushions and

curtains that went into a redecoration of their bedroom. Negotiating the caretaker's fear that if you emphasize that the women were lovers, you risk alienating your presumed heterosexual core audience for heritage homes, Ford's work intended to demonstrate how everyone can connect to the love story. Ford understands that this narrative "will be deeply meaningful to the LGBTQ+ community, but the broader idea of what love can be enriches everyone's understanding of history." Her work shows that creative methodologies for processing archival research are necessary to be able to activate the intricacies, serendipities, and emotions that come with realizing the wealth of queer histories held in on-site collections.

Her residency helped make the case for bigger changes at Plas Newydd including more purchases and potential loans highlighting lesbian history, new interpretation in consultation with Welsh lesbian historian Norena Shopland, a temporary display cabinet to expand the interpretations, and a moving portrait of Hoy and Sandler as Sarah and Eleanor. Finally, Ford and her partner held their wedding in the house's garden, the historic first official lesbian wedding on the grounds. The couple is featured in the Denbighshire County Council's wedding brochure, and, beneficial to the organization, the possibility of hosting queer weddings has opened up a new revenue stream. This is essential as the funding landscape for British arts, culture, and local councils has been decimated.

42. Based on her experiences, Ford prefers to work These are similar to rates set out in [Kunstenaarshonorarium in the Netherlands.](#) either through commissions that have contractual agreements paying fair union rates (e.g. of the Scottish Artist Union or Artist Union England) or to secure her own funding that remains in her control throughout the project.⁴² Reflecting on artist-in-residency schemes, she cautions that sometimes these arise from institutions



Sarah-Joy
Ford, Beloved/
Crafting Intimacies
with the Ladies
of Llangollen,
2022.

wanting to box tick certain groups for their reporting. This reductive goal may result in marginalized voices being brought into the organization and not having room to make interventions. From Queer Britain and Ford's experiences we can conclude that residencies should involve detailed communication about each party's intention to ensure the organization meets the artist(s) at least halfway and to form firm agreements on sensitive topics such as payment and freedom from censorship. Typically participants of museum programming that involves short-term education or creative activities are not financially compensated. However, a residency usually suggests some form of compensation, which might take the form of money or training or other forms of support. There is currently little policy directing institutions on what might be ethical or fair means of compensating long-term community learning and shared creative work. When in doubt, when heritage organizations like archives and museums contract artistic labour from community members or professional artists, they should abide by union rates and observe worker's rights.

Hands-on:
Artists Building a New Archive

Observing the emergence and development of queer and trans archives in Europe, the involvement of artists as donors, supporters, forerunners, and members of archives is striking. With the prevalent lack of queer and trans visibility, artists and other cultural practitioners have again and again gravitated to the task of engaging with such historical blind spots. Not only have they reactivated and expanded on archival artefacts and collections as critical visitors – as discussed in the previous three vignettes – but have also actively participated in the building of queer and trans archives.

43. In Poland, the artist Karol Radziszewski initiated the Queer Archives Institute (QAI) in 2015.⁴³ The project revolves around collecting archival materials in Central and Eastern Europe, and has been exhibited in different locations such as Berlin, Split, and São Paulo. QAI is a private collection, which is usually not accessible to the broader public and does not feature an online catalogue or other collection details. Rather, it has served as a focal node for Radziszewski's practice of approaching archive building from an artistic viewpoint. In parallel, he established *DIK Fagazine*, a publication series running since 2005, which combines queer archival research with contemporary art contributions in fourteen theme-specific volumes to-date. Titled *Poczet* (gallery of portraits), he later conceived the popular series of paintings of figures tied to the queer and trans history of Poland. Both projects explore ways of visualizing non-heteronormative heritage, proposing strategies of dealing with its characteristic fleetingness and ephemerality. Furthermore, Radziszewski's archival artworks have started to function as historic reference points themselves. For instance, his portrait of the Polish statesman, Józef Piłsudski, who helped decriminalise homosexual acts in the 1930s, is part of the collection displayed at the newly established Queer Muzeum in Warsaw. Similarly, the exhibition "LGBT+ Zones. Queer Art in Times of 'Good Change'" (2025) at Arsenal Municipal Gallery in Poznań prominently placed two of his works at the beginning of the show, suggesting their function as an important touchstone for the current movement for more queer and trans representation in



art spaces. From this perspective, the artist's archive-building practices are not only a commentary on the archive but also a part of it.

EdredonLab's project *Un mapa de desvíos* (a map of detours) is another instance of artists starting new archives. Founded in

^{44.} 2024, The Valencia-based collective, made up of the artists Sahara Dolores, Marina Incertis, Sara Aliana, and

EdredonLab
Instagram
account. Alejandro Ocaña, initiated a research project about the legacy

of queer communities in Spain's south-eastern Alicante territory.⁴⁴

Their point of departure was to collect a counter-archive of local histories that, in contrast to institutionalised collections, could be engaged with and "touched" more freely. They organised community workshops that served both to collect new materials and to discuss questions of archiving processes. EdredonLab also designed maps depicting queer experiences in public space. In conversation, the collective mentioned the importance of establishing protocols for their open workshops. They created cards with rules of how workshop participants should approach specific local environments and how they can raise awareness for the people represented in these spaces. The project laid bare the difficulties of working in less cosmopolitan or more conservative environments. As Alicante does not have a broad network of funded cultural institutions, the artists mentioned that it was difficult to get people involved in their project, and if they did, they often felt hesitant to proactively engage with the material, reportedly feeling

"almost undeserving" of claiming this heritage or fearing to 'out' each other. Furthermore, the collective couldn't access local archives, which either did not respond to their inquiries or denied access. In response, they turned to archives in other cities, such as Barcelona or Madrid, for archival materials about Alicante. Yet while they could secure some loans, these collaborations also signalled restrictions in terms of experimenting and reframing archival histories, for many archives imposed conditions on how their items

should be exhibited and worked with.

Ajamu X and Matthew Arthur Williams
in conversation, PERCOL Conference
"LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage & Ethical Stewardship,"
Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2024.



45. Another example of artists as key donors of queer and trans heritage are the founders of the Rukus! Archive project, Ajamu X studio website.

project, photographer Ajamu X and filmmaker and theatre director Topher Campbell. Initiated in 2005, the archive aimed to collect and promote the history of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities in the United Kingdom since the 1970s.⁴⁵ Apart from archiving a wide array of materials such as pamphlets, magazines, photographs, and garments they organised activities and events such as exhibitions, film screenings, and oral history projects. A driving impetus behind the initiative was to create a dynamic archive, which does not try to fix a static past, but rather strives towards col-

46. lecting polyphonic histories and future possibilities for Ajamu X, Topher Campbell, and Mary Stevens, "Love and Lubrication in the Archives, or rukus! A Black Queer Archive for the United Kingdom," *Archivaria* 68 (January 7, 2010): 271–94; Jamila Prowse, "Creating Change: Ajamu X on the Importance of Building a Nuanced Archive of Black Queer Life," *British Journal of Photography*, August 16, 2021.

Nonetheless, the two retained ownership over the archive. They point out how the decision to move the collection from Ajamu X's pri-

47. vate home into a professionalised institution rested not only on the opportunity for increased accessibility and better infrastructure, but also on the ways the collection would be perceived as more serious once it was housed in an institution dedicated to collecting the city. In conversation with the artist

Matthew Arthur Williams on the occasion of PERCOL's *Hands Off* (2024) conference, Black African and Caribbean histories research guide.

Ajamu X mentioned that this transposition also changed his personal relationship with the archive. Not only could he no longer access and experience the collection as effortlessly as when it was still in his basement, but also some of the community members that would visit his house to develop and study the archive would no longer engage in the same way.

Lasting Fingerprints: Developing Existing Archives

When artists center their projects around archival artefacts, they sometimes become entangled in archival organisations, eventually joining their boards and teams. Many of them start as volunteers in the archive, and some take on more permanent positions. The

^{48.} German mixed media artist Philipp Gufler, who has worked with queer and trans histories in his [textile](#), [video](#), and [performance-based](#) works for over a decade, joined the Forum Queeres Archiv München as a member in 2013.⁴⁹ He became responsible for the archive's Facebook and Instagram presence and, additionally, organised different community events. Archives profit from such additions to their teams, as they not only bring in professional skills in visual communication, but also build potential links from aging archives to younger generations. In

^{49.} a similar vein, Warsaw-based dramaturg and theatre producer Szymon Adamczak joined Queer Muzeum, taking a seat on its Program Council, and also offers public tours of the archive.⁵⁰ In his practice, Adamczak has been working

on a research project on the British gay rights activist Bob Mellors, who spent a prolonged time living in Poland in the early 1990s.⁵⁰ In an interview for PERCOL, Adamczak stated that becoming part of the Queer Muzeum has helped to professionalise his research, as he could transfer his Mellors collection to the museum's professional archive. He highlights that the artist can bring in new perspectives on investigating queer and trans histories, as their process-driven practices operate on longer time horizons and are not predicated on predefined outcomes. They experiment more freely with the complexity of different layers and research

questions that are contained in archives such as Mellors'. One example of such an artistic-archival laboratory is Adamczak's performance piece *Goodbye to Discretion* (2025) for which

he directed a group of actors and community members to read and reenact passages from Mellors' archive in a theatre in Poznań. Artists can maneuver between different spaces without having to be tied down to them, but also facilitate different collaborative situations that expose the archive to different lenses and people, and in this way, become more social and accessible to new audiences.

[Forum Muenchen website](#), [Philipp Gufler website](#)

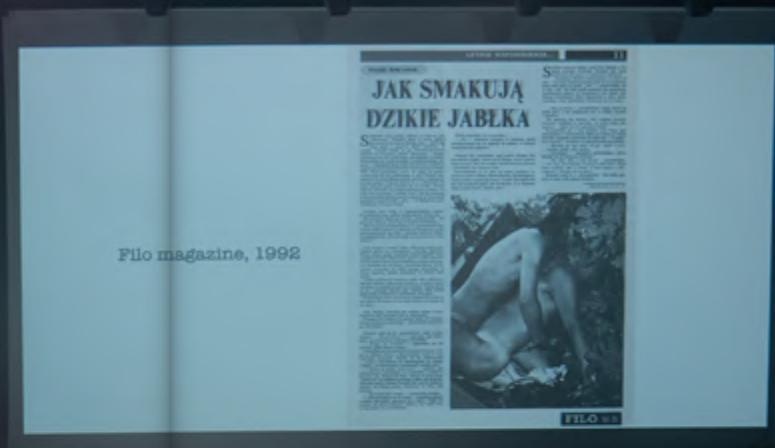
[QueerMuzeum Warzawa website](#)

^{50.} [Szymon Adamczak Instagram account](#)



Philipp Gufler, Quilt #47
(Charlotte Wolff), 2022.

Still from the audiovisual material generated through the digitization of Wolfgang Reder's estate donated to QWIEN – Zentrum für queere Geschichte, conducted by Guilherme Maggessi and Rafał Morusiewicz, 2024.



Moreover, contemporary artists have regularly served as donors of important collections to queer and trans archives. In 2018, the Stockholm-based artist Sam Hultin took over the private archive of the lesbian activist and trans pioneer Eva-Lisa Bengtson.⁵¹ Bengtson

^{51.} had founded the first club for trans people in Sweden called Sam Hultin “Transvestia” in 1964 and was a member of several activist website organisations such as Lesbiks Front and RFSL Stockholm.

Before Bengtson’s passing, Hultin had worked with her on a series of filmed interviews and later inherited her private archive, documenting her life as an activist. In subsequent years, the artist donated the archive to The Archives and Library of the Queer Movement (QRAB), housed at the Regional State Archives in Gothenburg, and thus made it available to other interested practitioners and scholars.⁵² In parallel, Hultin continued steward-

^{52.} Queerrörelsens
ing and sharing the memory of Bengtson via Arkiv och Bibliotek (QRAB)
his artistic practice such as guided city-walks,
website. collective readings, and anniversary celebrations. When artists take on the role of both key steward and activator, there can be a lot of pressure on their practice, without which the found

queer ancestor might fall back into oblivion. One artist reported how, after a while, they started to feel trapped in their role as caretaker of an endangered legacy, confronting them with an ethical dilemma. In such scenarios, a donation to an institutional archive can mean a sharing of responsibility and the securing of an endangered legacy independent of an artist’s future journey.

More recently, the hybridizing of roles taken on by artists while working in archives has become increasingly commonplace. Artists sometimes succeed in securing research funding for multiple years, which enables them to build a more sustained relationship with a collection. They approach the archive not as a freelance artist, but as collaborators and part of an institutional framework. The artistic duo Guilherme Maggessi and Rafał Morusiewicz, based in Vienna, obtained a grant from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF – Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds)

for their project “W/ri/gh/ting Archives through Artistic Research” (2022–2026).⁵³ Spanning three years, Maggessi/Morusiewicz were hosted at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and engaged with institutional partners such as Vienna’s QWIEN – Zentrum für queeres Leben and the queerANAr-

^{53.} chive in Split.⁵⁴ The duo’s experimental film project, titled Guilherme Pereira Maggessi de Oliveira website, Rafał Morusiewicz website, Wolfgang (currently still in production), emerged from this research residency. Revolving around QWIEN’s holdings of the Vienna-based architect Writing archives website. Wolfgang Reder, an active proponent of the local gay website.

^{54.} scene, the film explores Reder’s vast collections of materials, among them almost seventy indexed fold-ers of pornographic images, fashion adverts, and HIV/ AIDS awareness campaigns. Maggessi/Morusiewicz conducted interviews with people who knew Reder and digitised his collection, which was reportedly at high risk of deterioration. On the one hand, their activities thus secured and extended QWIEN’s collection, temporarily taking on the role of the archivist. On the other hand, the resulting works provide incomplete or imperfect representations of the archive, as artists follow their interests and instincts. For instance, while working on *Wolfgang*, the two artists focused on images that were not overtly pornographic (a large share of Reder’s collection consists of explicit sexual content). In this regard, there are simultaneous and mutually beneficial dynamics that can emerge from such long-term artist-archive collaborations.

In a similar vein, the artist and curator Tomka Weiß has been working on establishing an archive for trans, intersex, non-binary people (tin*) that could potentially be hosted at the Schwules Museum in

^{55.} Giegold & Weiß website Berlin.⁵⁵ In collaboration with Luan Pertl, co-manager of the museum, and a broader tin* community network, Weiß aims to build an archive as well as an art library (“Artothek”). In previous years, he consulted for the museum on exhibition projects and exhibited an installation piece revolving around the voices of intersex activists in the show “Mercury Rising. Inter*Hermstory[ies]

POSITIV LEBEN.

Jeder kann positiv sein.
Ohne es zu wissen.
Das heißt für jeden,
sich und andere zu schützen.
Zum positiv leben.

Szymon Adamczak,
Goodbye to Discretion,
2025.

Chase Allen



Adam Men PIPS

Kiefer/Staud

56. Now and Then" (2021).⁵⁶ Weiß's continued engagement with the museum again points to how artists Mercury Rising – *Inter* Hermstory[ies] Now and Then* (exhibition), October 15, 2021 – April 25, 2022, Schwules Museum, Berlin.

can become entangled in queer and trans archives over a longer period and how their sustained relationships open up new roles for artists as collaborators and contributors. For their current initiative, Weiß and Pertl realised the "Quilt 4 tin* Archive" project, for which they asked 30 selected international tin* activists to present three objects that they consider relevant for a tin archive. They stress the importance of involving tin* individuals not only as contributors, but also as proofreaders to build a collective structure for the archive. Cautioning against the problem of 'self-cloning,' where grassroots activists deploy a too narrow vision of representation and visibility based on their immediate environment, they devised a structure that involves both paid community members and a pool of experts for specific inquiries. Moreover, there is an emphasis on integrating artistic and archival practices via their envisioned art library. The "Artothek" serves to facilitate access to non-heteronormative art and to promote tin* artists as well as to build a new social space where individuals can enter the archive differently and with lower access barriers. In this regard, the art library responds not only to the desire to broaden and diversify LGBTQ+ collections, but also to establish safe and 'vivified' spaces that enliven the archive.

Tips for Artists Looking to Engage with Archives

Through these instructive vignettes, we have sought to provide a range of examples of how artists have participated in archival work, artistically researched archives, and re-activated and distributed materials. In this section, we provide a quick overview of practical tips regarding the preparation and decisions artists might need to make when engaging with archives and collections.

IDENTIFICATION

Artists can arrange to independently visit archives and museums, and can choose to announce themselves as artists or surreptitiously enter as general visitors. Many larger state archives require registration in advance, and even require credentials. Others like the Bishopsgate Institute are open to anyone and do not even require an identification card or a signature to access collections. Some archives, such as the lesbian archive in Paris Archives, Recherches et Cultures Lesbiennes (ARCL), ask visitors to fill out an online questionnaire to arrange their first visit.⁵⁷ This form asks visitors to indicate their professional and educational background, their field of interest, but also in what form they could potentially give back to the archive via their research (such as inventorising boxes, sharing the finished research thesis, or supporting the association otherwise).

57. Archives, Recherches et Cultures Lesbiennes.

6.91

VISITING

Check the opening times and procedure for accessing documents before visiting. You may need to request materials weeks in advance, or at least 24 hours before. To view personal collections, such as of French writer, photographer, and activist Hervé Guibert, you need to secure an invitation from the custodian. Rarely will you have someone who can accompany you through the process of examining materials. In these scenarios, as a visitor, you will likely need to communicate your interests and intentions to someone familiar with the collection so that they can assist you in locating relevant sources and

records. Even if you are only intermittently visiting the archive, the volunteer, librarian, or collections manager that you interact with might be treated as a collaborator. Consider the kind of care you can extend to them. A conversation about care for custodians, users, and sources with regards to responsibility, access needs, inclusive language and infrastructures, and privacy requirements could generate new meanings for materials and inform the artistic research process.

RELATIONSHIP

Other scenarios to engage with archives might be more involved, such as being selected for an artistic research residency at the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision or joining a public residency program like Museum Arnhem has organized. You might be commissioned to carry out an artistic project in the context of a historic collection like the Charleston House in Sussex, England, or selected to create an exhibition based on the collection, which occurs regularly at the Schwules Museum. These deep modes of engagement entail detailed decision-making around the obligations and caregiving responsibilities of the parties involved. Along with the agreements made regarding commitment and payment, a “care rider” (discussed in the next section) would map out the short and long term needs and desires of the artist parties involved. For the organization, it could be relevant to discuss if certain sources or collections are off-limits, or are assigned, what expectations are regarding the output or outcome of the project, who retains ownership rights, and whether the artist should continue to inform the archive about the evolving work should it take new forms and travel to different contexts. Artists should be empowered to work and critically reflect on archival material and collections in an open manner, with full protection of their artistic freedom and from any form of censorship.

ROLE

Before you visit, during or after, we suggest that when you visit archives and collections as an artist, you consider what researcher mode resonates most with you. Are you feeling the approach of a Critical visitor, Friend, Detective, Scavenger, Disrupter ... or do you prefer to hover between facilitator/challenger, apprentice/advisor, and seeker/giver? This reflection should help you clarify your intentions for engaging with the collections as well as the archival staff and volunteers and possible new audiences that your artchival work reaches.

Archivists and collections managers are increasingly reflecting on their role as custodians and caretakers of the collection. Some are also developing tools to extend this care for records and materials to people: the donors, consultants, and other actors within the sphere of heritage spaces. Here we can point to two comprehensive publications that provide ethical guidance for caring inclusion, which can be extended to artists:

- (1) *Trans-Inclusive Culture: Guidance on advancing trans inclusion for museums, galleries, archives and heritage organisations* (2023) published by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester.⁵⁸
- (2) *LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums: An incomplete guideline* (2024) published by the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO).⁵⁹

Diversity, inclusion and wellbeing website.

Both focus their ethical framework as emergent from legal responsibilities to foster equality and uphold human rights, which undergird the duty of care in the cultural sector.

The field of museum ethics has a longstanding tradition. See for example Gary Edson, ed., *Museum Ethics: Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 1997), and Richard Sandell, *Museums, Morality and Human Rights* (Routledge, 2017).

In contrast, the *Archival Care Rider Manual* (2025, hereafter ACR) published by the Collecting Otherwise working group at the

Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam

Information on the Collecting Otherwise Project

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orient their responsibilities to the record creator/donor, the record, and the user based on a feminist ethics of care.⁶⁰ The ACR Manual is a tool outlining six steps that facilitate archivists in rethinking the archival acquisition process and the expectations that guide that process.⁶¹ They include information on how the ACR was implemented at the Nieuwe Instituut's acquisition of materials from

the group were Michael Karabinos, Harriet Rose Morley, Hetty Berens, Ernst des Bouvrie and Setareh Noorani, with additional contributions from Mayim Frieden and Lidewij Timmers. Five "tools" including one for creating an Archival Care Rider have been published in the bundle: Delany Boutkan, Mayim Frieden, Anya Naumova, Setareh Noorani, The Collecting Otherwise Manual Series (Nieuwe Instituut, 2025). They are downloadable here.

the *Vrouwen Bouwen Wonen* (Women Building Living) action group and feminist network. The group that developed this manual was inspired by archival scholars Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor's call for "radical empathy" to guide social justice concerns in the archive, in which "archivists are seen as caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, users, and communities through a web of mutual affective responsibility."⁶² The Archival Care Rider's method of care throughout the archival acquisition process builds on tenets in feminist ethics of care that prioritize relationality and situatedness: attending to how and where care and maintenance take place, and who is responsible. Archives and collections need to proactively and affectively create conditions of care with the ACR being a starting point for your own "reparative archival practices" attuned to the specifics of your situation.

In many heritage domains there is a growing awareness of how care should be directed towards maintaining the source/record itself. These guides and the ARC call for including caregiving to multiple voices that speak about a singular source and their specific narratives. These expansions on the responsibility for the care and maintenance of the archive and collection to those most firmly connected to the materials forms an inroad to foster better relations with queer and trans artists. Artists could be a part of all these activities: speaking about the source, articulating narratives about it, creating a record, taking part in caring and maintaining the archive, plus exhibiting the record in new contexts or within other frames.

Signalled in the Nieuwe Instituut tool manual's name, the practice of using a 'rider' like an 'artist rider' is another important reference point for how museums and archives can create conditions of care. A rider

Reflect:

What does the typical acquisition process of your institution or organisation look like?³

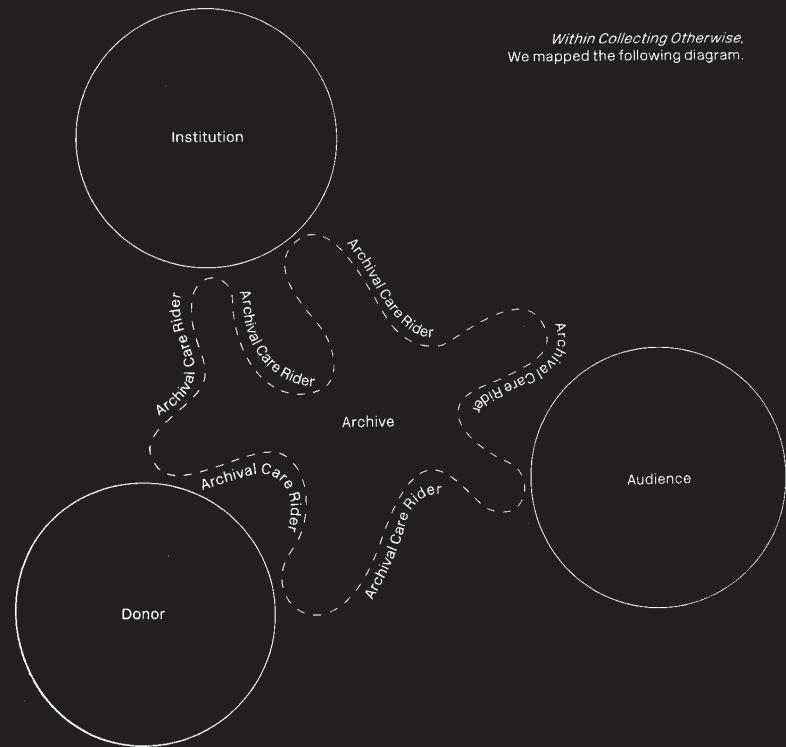
Ask:

Who is involved in this process? What information is shared with those involved? What role do those involved play, and what is the relationship between these roles?

Create a diagram tracing the answers to these questions.

This diagram can be referred to throughout any future acquisition.

Within *Collecting Otherwise*,
We mapped the following diagram.



³ When an archive is acquired, a contract – between the donor and the host institution – is signed, cementing the host institution's responsibility for the archival material(s). With the primary focus on the transfer of ownership from the donor to the institution, these contracts can facilitate a more 'passive' acquisition process, in which the donor is not involved in the acquisition beyond the signing of the contract.

is a document co-signed by the artist and the hiring institution which details agreements about meeting the technical and logistical needs of performers in the period around a performance. Formally a rider is an addendum to a contractual agreement for labor that enables the artist to negotiate their working relationship with an organization to ensure the necessary conditions are met for giving a performance. In this sense, a rider is aimed at creating conditions of care for one artist or a troupe. But a rider can also be tailored to support the needs of a specific marginalized or vulnerable group.

Downloadable templates and banks of question prompts for a contractual rider have been developed for the specific needs of disabled and trans artists. Diversity Arts Culture Project Office (*Berliner Projektbüro für Diversitätsentwicklung*) in Germany created an overview of prompts and a literature list about making an access rider for disabled artists to ensure their needs are met and to foster confidence and comfort in being able to work together with a hiring organization.⁶³ Access needs differ for everyone, but these could

63. include how you communicate, your ideal meeting situation, the event itself, travel and

costs, installs and marketing. The

Access Culture (*Acesso Cultura*) group active in the museum world of Portugal developed a regularly updated template for a trans-inclusive rider to help cultural organisations to welcome – in an inclusive, informed, respectful way – trans colleagues, collaborators or artists.⁶⁴ It covers information

which the organization can or must make available

64. Access Rider in Access to the trans person, information which the trans person can make available to the organization that

hires them or wishes to collaborate with them, and stipulations for door policy. The collective of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color theatre workers who call themselves “We See You

65.
Principles for Building
Anti-Racist Theatre
Systems.

W.A.T” have published a list of BIPOC demands for White American Theatre.⁶⁵ Abiding by these demands and following their principles is a means towards developing a new social contract for their work environments that cares for and sustains their artistry and lives.

These examples indicate the potential for the wider category of a ‘care rider’ that articulates the needs and required conditions for invited guests, speakers, artists, and other kinds of collaborators. These resources could be adopted and adapted by artists or by cultural and heritage organizations to generate the basis for a care rider for (contractual) collaborations with archivally engaged artists. We hope to have inspired archives and collections of all sizes and interests to work towards more transparency about what is on offer and possible, which should lead to stronger and more equitable community participation.

In closing, we offer a few further considerations for heritage organizations as they embark on creating a caring environment for artistic collaboration. By reflecting on these questions, heritage professionals will be supported in clarifying their intentions and capacities to work in an equitable manner with engaged artists.

Do we have funding and capacity in place to support and adhere to care riders? How will implementing a care rider change the “archivist” and “collection manager” roles at my organization? What protocol needs to be updated to offer care for the visiting artist, the artist-in-residence, or the artistic researcher?

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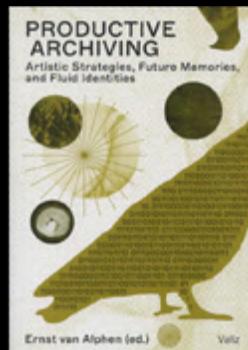
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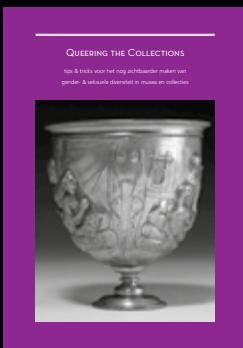
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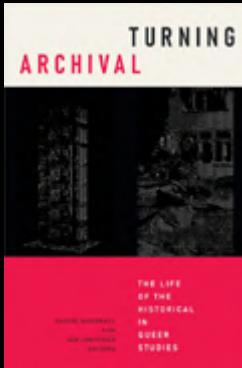
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Credits

Pablo Lerma, *It does not stop at images (Homologie & San Francisco Sentinel, Gay List)*, 2019– ongoing, Installation view Blooming Archive, IHLIA Amsterdam (2024). Image credit Fabian Landewe.

Tabea Nixdorff, *Feminist Design Strategies*, 2021, Installation view Blooming Archive, IHLIA Amsterdam (2024). Image credit Fabian Landewe.

Tabea Nixdorff, *Feminist Design Strategies*, 2021, Tabea Nixdorff, *Feminist Design Strategies*, 2021, Installation view Blooming Archive, IHLIA Amsterdam (2024). Image credit Fabian Landewe.

Lucas Odahara, *Os sons deles ecoando entre eu e você*, 2017, Installation view at Schwules Museum*, Berlin, (2017). Image credit Daniel Weigel.

Andrée Ospina, *Les femmes et les LGBTQIA+ sont-ils caché·es entre les pages des livres?*, 2024, Detail of installation at Centre des livres d'artistes, Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche.

Andrée Ospina, *Les femmes et les LGBTQIA+ sont-ils caché·es entre les pages des livres?*, Le Centre des livres d'artistes, Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche, 2024.

Oscar Eriksson Furunes, red, 2023, Installation view Blooming Archive, IHLIA Amsterdam (2024). Image credit Fabian Landewe.

Oscar Eriksson Furunes, red, IHLIA. Image credit Fabian Landewe.

Jyoti Mistry, *Loving in Between*, short film, 18 min., 2023.

Queer Britain Community Residency LGBTQ+ Traveller+, Collaging Together, February 2024. Photography taken by Nan Dorrego Carreira.

Queer Britain Community Residency LGBTQ+ Traveller, Installation View of Exhibition Corner with Collages and Dress worn by Traveller Drag Race Star Cherry Valentine, May 2024. Photography taken by Nan Dorrego Carreira.

Sarah-Joy Ford, *Beloved/ Crafting Intimacies with the Ladies of Llangollen*, Installation view of the bedroom with newly designed textiles, Plas Newydd Historic House in Llangollen, Wales, 2022.

Edredonlab, *Un mapa de desvíos*, June 2024. Image credit Nuria Guillén Monteagudo.

Ajamu X and Matthew Arthur Williams in conversation, PERCOL Conference “LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage & Ethical Stewardship,” Dundee Contemporary Arts, 1.2.2024. Image credit Glyn Davis.

Philipp Gufler, *Quilt #47* (Charlotte Wolff), 2022, Installation view Blooming Archive, IHLIA Amsterdam (2024). Image credit Fabian Landewe.

Still from the audiovisual material generated through the digitization of Wolfgang Reder's estate donated to QWIEN – Zentrum für queere Geschichte, conducted by Guilherme Maggessi and Rafał Morusiewicz in January–May 2024.

Szymon Adamczak, *Goodbye to Discretion*, Pawilon (Poznań) 25.6.2025, Image credit/ Tomasz Koszewnik.

Collecting Otherwise Working Group at Nieuwe Instituut (Rotterdam, the Netherlands), Excerpt from the Archival Care Rider/ Strengthening Care Practices Tool, Page 3 showing the Diagram for Step 2 of creating an Archival Care Rider, 2025.

The design of the publication is conceived as a device that mirrors its content. Structured as a working document, the book explores the arrangement of information as a system of notes that weave through the text, tracing unstable and porous boundaries. Like an archive, the document preserves, organizes, and at the same time activates the collected memories, observed images, and shared forms of knowledge, assuming the role of custodian and mediator of knowledge in constant transformation.

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Do we have funding and capacity in place to support and adhere to care riders? How will implementing a care rider change the “archivist” and “collection manager” roles at my organization? What protocol needs to be updated to offer care for the visiting artist, the artist-in-residence, or the artistic researcher?