

(art meets archive)

JUXTAPOSITIONS

The archive is alive and at play in art, literature and the popular imagination. [art meets archive] explores what happens when the work of an archive is juxtaposed with the work of contemporary artists

In her new role as Creative Producer, Exhibition and Marketing Projects, Susan Charlton has begun to develop fresh approaches to exhibitions, publications and special events to extend State Records' place in the cultural life of the community.

In particular, she identifies artists as potential new participants in the interpretive life of State Records: 'Many artists already have a fascination and affection for the concept of the archive. We plan to invite them to engage creatively with our collection, along with writers, performers, filmmakers, broadcasters and other creative practitioners.'

Evidence of this new approach is apparent in [art meets archive], the first exhibition Charlton has initiated for the Sydney Records Centre in The Rocks. The exhibition, which opens to the public on Friday 12 April, is a first step in an ongoing program of curated exhibitions that will contextualise the role of State Records and its unique collection.

[art meets archive] juxtaposes the work of contemporary artists with aspects of the work of archives. The first juxtaposition is between 'Double Vision' — a bewitching painting by *Sydney Morning Herald* illustrator Michael Fitzjames, which shows an aerial view of Sydney Harbour crossed by two Harbour Bridges — and a 1912 'Birds-Eye View' plan from the State archives collection, which also imagines two crossings of the Harbour — a cantilever bridge and a subway.

The 'Birds-Eye View' was just one of many alternative visions generated by engineers, architects and politicians for a crossing of the Harbour before the design of the current Bridge was finally accepted, constructed and opened, 70 years ago on 19 March. Susan Charlton recognised the synchronicity between the 'Birds-Eye View' and Fitzjames' 'Double Vision', which was originally commissioned by the City of Sydney, but not accepted



↑ Michael Fitzjames and his painting of Sydney Harbour, 'Double Vision'

PHOTO: PENELOPE CLAY

[art meets archive]
12 April – 29 June 2002
Sydney Records Centre
Globe Street (off George Street),
The Rocks
enquiries: (02) 8276 5624



↑ Conference room at Brodsky International Realty Service, New York, USA, ICOLS

www.icols.org



↑ Ron Adams & George Adams



↑ Ryszard Dabek



↑ Christopher Dean



↑ Vienna All-Girl Show



↑ Sarah Goffman



↑ 'Zine Show



↑ The Hollywood Show

of Missing Links and Department of Global Disenchantment. Live events, including launches, publications, installations, workshops, site-specific projects and interventions are due to follow.

Susan Charlton saw an uncanny connection between the ICOLS project and *Archives Investigator*, which charts the evolution of government agencies, from the beginning of the Colony of NSW to the present, as a contextual finding aid for researchers seeking State records. *Archives Investigator* (www.records.nsw.gov.au) reveals that some of the 1500 real agencies documented so far have titles just as quizzical as those that appear on ICOLS, notably the Wild Dog Destruction Board, the Housekeepers Emergency Service of New South Wales and the Technological, Industrial and Sanitary Museum.

The third juxtaposition is between the portable Briefcase gallery — assembled by artists Simon Barney and Christopher Dean — and 'Material Evidence' a tribute to the arcane materiality of the traditional archive reading room. Barney has been curating bi-weekly solo and group exhibitions in the Briefcase gallery for the last two years. These exhibitions open at the Hollywood Hotel in Surry Hills and can be viewed thereafter, accidentally or by appointment.

Documentation, recordkeeping and archive practices are not just the mission of the bureaucrat, but also the task of the artist. Artist documentation, such as slides, catalogues and reviews, are often the only proof that an exhibition has actually taken place. Certainly no successful grant application is possible without high quality recordkeeping and documentation.

Alas some slides are overexposed, lack focus or have gone mouldy in basement storage. Barney and Dean have assembled an 'Archive of Dud Slides' for the show in honour of the beautiful accidents that have survived. The Briefcase archive will be displayed within the exhibition, but will also leave the premises periodically, roam freely in the public realm and return to the archive. It will come and go, just as our regular researchers do; contextualised within and beyond the archive.

Despite the fact that most records are now 'born digital' (see page 2) and many original records, such as the 'Registry of Flash Men' (see page 14) are being digitised for greater public access, most contemporary archives will be poised between the material and the digital for years to come. There is still an enormous amount of affection for the investigative tools of the pre-digital archive.

In honour of this passing historical world, Susan Charlton and exhibition designer Kylie Legge have created 'Material Evidence', a showcase installation which plays with the sculptural materiality of archive reading rooms: the microfilm, microfiche and aperture cards; the paper files, archive boxes, straps and tape; the conservators' hand-made folders and sleeves for items of a tricky shape or size.

The juxtapositions of [art meets archive] are the first sign that new relationships with State Records and new interpretations of its role and collection are about to begin.

ARTIST TALKS
Sydney Records Centre
Bookings: (02) 8276 5613

Michael Fitzjames
5.00 - 6.00pm Tues 16 April

Briefcase gallery
Simon Barney & Christopher Dean
5.00 - 6.00pm Tues 23 April

International Corporation of Lost Structures
Suzanne Treister & Bronia Iwanczak
5.00 - 6.00pm Tues 30 April

PREVIEW
Briefcase gallery 'Archive of Dud Slides' preview opening
6.00 - 8.00pm Tues 9 April
Hollywood Hotel, cnr Hunt & Foster Streets Surry Hills

for its collection. Not all visions are accepted and venerated. Even those that are initially rejected can go on to live in other contexts, as the 'Birds-Eye View' and 'Double Vision' do in this exhibition.

The second juxtaposition is between the International Corporation of Lost Structures (ICOLS) — a web-centred cross-disciplinary project, directed by Suzanne Treister and Bronia Iwanczak — and *Archives Investigator* — a web-based catalogue to the State archives collection.

ICOLS (<http://www.icols.org>) uses the model of a corporation to create an international, artist-driven organisation. An increasing number of local and international artists have taken up staff positions within ICOLS' global corporate structure, including the roles of Psychic Architect, Lab Technician and Funambulist for its Department of Dislocated Memory, Local Unit



↑ Opening of the first Briefcase exhibition in a pub, 2000

PHOTOS: SIMON BARNEY