

*THE PROMISE OF  
SOMETHING AND NOTHING.*

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*2015*

THE PROMISE OF SOMETHING AND NOTHING.

Neither a rematerialized catalog nor an appropriated exhibition, this publication constructs its own space for response and debate. This collection of texts and artists' works extend the proposed discourse of *The Promise of Something and Nothing* and is the result of interdisciplinary practitioners who were invited to produce activity/inactivity as a collection of experiences examining archival production. Here the shared communication of information and materials construct an archival organism that is, even if temporarily or in substantive duration by reproduction, held in an alternative physical space.

*The Promise of Something and Nothing*, as exhibition and publication, launched on August 1, 2015 at Sonce Alexander Gallery. The exhibition, to be shown for a month, features **Kevin Cooley & Phillip Andrew Lewis, Klaus Dauven, Chris Engman, Fatherless, Heyward Hart, Anne Guro Larsmon, neverhitsend, Emily Shanahan, Colin Patrick Smith, They Are Here, Samira Yamin** and is curated by **Ann Harezlak**.

*The Promise of Something and Nothing*, as publication, additionally features responses from **Kirsten Cooke, Ellen Greig, Lily Hall & Mette Kjærgaard Præst, Una Hamilton Helle, neverhitsend, They Are Here** and **Jenna Yuanyuan Bao**.

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Both the exhibition and the publication are a staging of international artistic practices and invited response sustaining dialogue on Art Archives. The title, a prominent acknowledgment of Penelope Curtis's text *From Out of the Shadows in All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*, provides the impetus for a range of voices to converge, prompt and occupy.

The ephemeral as archivable (material or process) reveals physicality, authority and locality — manifesting as indexable with constructed permanence. Hierarchies of temporality, fashioned by aesthetic considerations, when valued within a common architecture commence an Archive: a topography produced through reframing but also regeneration.

*The Promise of Something and Nothing* is constructed under the commandment of a curatorial agenda, involving from the outset practitioners that navigate archive production through image production. Divisions and ruptures which are expressed through dimensionality repeat as archival impulse with given vulnerabilities. Reanimated components, layered microcosms housed within an exhibition space, stimulate partitions and pathways to accessibility. These receptive conditions offer potentiality in artistic gestures and alternative classifications paralleling the archival organism's contentious nature.

**Sonce Alexander Gallery, 2015.**



THE INVESTIGATION OF A VHS  
CASSETTE FOUND ON THE STREETS  
OF RIGA, LATVIA, IN AUGUST 2010  
2015 – ONGOING  
NTSC VHS CASSETTE, TV & VCR PLAYER,  
VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE  
1 HR 49 MINS 22 SEC

THEY ARE HERE

## FINDS

A VHS tape of a stranger's 45th birthday party is a useful example. Harun found it in 2010 in Riga, the capital city of Latvia. It was on the ground by a bin on a high street. With no cassette player to hand it went unwatched for a year. Half a decade later it appears in this exhibition. In 2012 (two years after the video was found) Helen discovered a classified advert in the Russian language newspaper *Angliya*, circulated in London. It was authored by a man named Dainis, who offered flowers in exchange for help finding work. This newspaper spent four months on Helen's desk. It could so easily have been moved to the recycling bin. Instead, after a period of gathering dust and gently yellowing, Helen brought it to her collaborator Harun and they collectively decided to contact the writer of the advert. Since 2012, *They Are Here* have built a relationship with Dainis and his wife Iveta, who live in Ilford in East London. In 2015, we collaborated with Dainis to develop an exhibition that begins with this discovery of his advert. Later this year, we intend to screen the VHS tape to Dainis and invite him to work as a paid collaborator, aiding our investigation of this footage.

We are curious about the gap between finding something and doing something with that find. A sense it may have some future purpose is usually immediate but intuitive. This immediacy demands a catching up with one's own conscious mind, slowed by an initial inability to identify what that find may become. And so that thing — removed from its site of discovery for safekeeping — journeys from an incidental situation to a hard-drive or the back of a shelf or a pile of papers on a desk. We want to consider this gap. This indefinite period of storage, in which a find has an unfixed status, oscillating between junk, memento and archival material. During this period, the find sets something in motion in the finder... a search for a new context for the find; unsatisfied until an understanding emerges, or an opportunity for it to be applied is revealed. We are enamoured of the indeterminacy of a thing discovered — but yet to be brought into a public field of play.

## FINDS

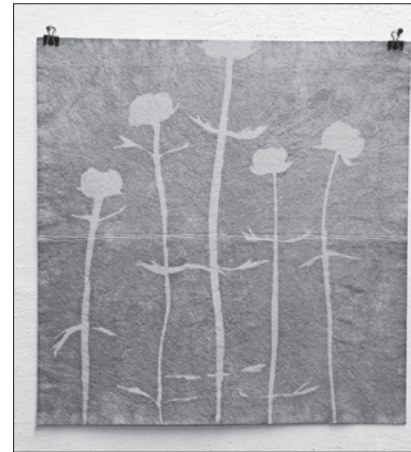
Can a useful parallel be drawn between determining the difference of an 'action and their translation into documentary photographs' and the status of the find in this period of acquisition before application? In an interview between artists Ján Mancuska and Jirí Kovanda; published in *Frieze* (March 2008) Kovanda suggests we focus on the question of when does 'communication take place'.

JM I'm very interested in the transition that occurred between the performance of your actions and their translation into documentary photographs. There are no audiences present at some of your actions. The only people who know they're art are you and the photographer. But the resulting photograph isn't the artwork, it's the action, isn't it?

JK The question is when communication takes place. I think it's at the moment when the thing is referred to as art. That means that if an action has an audience, it happens straightaway. If no spectators have been invited, however, I think it doesn't take place until afterwards, in the artistic space — in other words, either at an exhibition, or in print, it doesn't matter. In short, when it's presented as art.

What changes is *how* the find is thought about. This shift in thinking is not a communicative act between artist and visitor, but an internal, cognitive process, the precursor to public communication taking place. To develop a practice contingent on the embrace of chance discoveries is willfully precarious. To rely on happenstance defies the programmable and predictive. Making unlikely 'finds' the root of a process resists a culture perpetually 'pressed for time'. It is a rejection of the mechanistic productivity increasingly demanded by employers and government.

*Helen Walker & Harun Morrison  
They Are Here  
July 2015  
[www.theyarehere.net](http://www.theyarehere.net)*



GLOBEFLOWER  
2015  
DIRT ON CHAMOIS  
15" X 14"



KLAUS DAUVEN

UNTITLED  
2015  
DIRT ON CHAMOIS  
14" X 6"

COLIN PATRICK SMITH



8:13 PM (PLANT)  
2009  
ARCHIVAL INKJET  
24.75" X 30.75", FRAMED



5:46 PM (RED COAT)  
2009  
ARCHIVAL INKJET  
24.75" X 30.75", FRAMED

## PRIMARY SOURCES

### THE ARCHIVE OF ROGER ELY: FRAGMENTS OF MATERIAL IN MOTION

*Lily Hall & Mette Kjærgaard Præst*

Might the past's 'fugitive moments' be leaky, syncopated, and errant moments — moments stitched through with repetition and manipulated to recur in works of performance, works of ritual, works of art, works of reenactment that play with time as malleable material? As malleable *political* material? Might the past's fugitive moments not only remind us of yesterday's sense of tomorrow, but also compose the sense again and offer, without expiration date, a politic of possibility?!

This text marks the start of a new archival project that will look at a critical period of cultural production in the UK from the 1970s to the 1990s through the lens of documents, materials and experiences held by the artist, curator, publisher and collector Roger Ely.

The project will, eventually, evolve into two public resources — a website and an exhibition — which will each be contextualized by programs of public events. However as it stands today, the material that constitutes the archive is fragmented: It is held in disparate locations, and to a large extent its primary source material is Ely's own memories.

The act of writing this text signals the start of a conversation that has become an integral part of a process of opening up a series of questions around the urgency, relevance and necessity of working with this particular archive. Fueled in part by the fact that Roger Ely has been diagnosed with terminal cancer, public funding has recently been secured to embark on this project, for which we have been invited by independent artists' producer Edd Hobbs, as curators to work with Ely and to think through how the material might be positioned in new ways.

As we are about to enter Ely's collection, it seems necessary to consider which forms archiving can take: how the archive might materialize, what story it might tell, and to whom will it be told. We are also considering our own motivations: Why are we interested in this archive? What do we bring to it, how is it relevant today and how will its production affect the material itself? Integral to these questions is our relationship with Roger Ely: How we work together, and what he is both interested and able to share with us in terms of his process of remembering, and the sheer availability of archival material — much of which may be held elsewhere and by others. These questions will have a bearing on the project as it unfolds: they will be revisited and readdressed over time; generating new lines of enquiry and an on-going mode of reflection.

Ely's practice is that of an artist, curator, publisher and collector. He has been involved in organizing projects that often have an ephemeral, durational character; and whilst he himself has been collecting documents, footage and ephemera relating to these events — perhaps foreseeing a future archive — embarking on the task of cataloguing his rhizomatic collection brings up questions of how one approaches an archive of such fluid matter.

The initial period of research involves collating, cataloguing and digitizing Ely's collection: material relating to his involvement with — amongst others — William Burroughs, Derek Jarman, Cerith Wyn Evans, Kathy Acker, Genesis P-Orridge, Cosey Fanni Tutti; and projects including *Primary Sources* magazine, which Ely co-founded and edited from 1979–1982; B2 which ran through the first half of the 1980s in a warehouse in Wapping, London; and the Zap Club, which ran in Brighton from 1982–2007.

Materials relating to Ely's years in Brighton are now stored at The Keep, an archival center at the University of Sussex; Screen Archive South East, a public sector moving image archive for the South East of England in Chichester; while a large body of material is stored at his home in west London.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

Ely often acted as a catalyst bringing together individuals from different fields — combining theater, live art, experimental writing, art criticism, improvised and experimental music, film and installation. The act of archiving his collection is an attempt to make available the histories of these collaborations, meetings and relationships, always focusing on the production of new work. In Ely's words,

In effect, the organiser becomes an 'engineer of the imagination', mustering up as much energy, money, bullshit and conviction as possible to make it happen. And oh, my god, when the work surprises you — when it lifts people out of their standard consciousness — that is when all the hard work, persuasion, subterfuge and penury makes sense. Then, there is nothing better.<sup>2</sup>

Our current relationship with Ely is one that involves an exchange of knowledge, and as we revisit these moments we begin to bring our own distinct perspectives to bear upon the narrative. The motivation to engage in this process comes from an impulse to learn and compare situations — across generations and political climates — with the potential to produce new knowledge and possibilities.

We are considering this collection as part of a living organism, consisting of fragments of material in constant motion. Likewise we acknowledge that this archive will always be shifting depending on *who* is looking, *when* and *from where*. The archive, then, is not a finished entity, nor a finite amount of knowledge ready to be consumed, but an ongoing story, partly told by its readers, who will bring their own knowledge and narratives to it. As such we are aware that this text inevitably becomes part of the archive itself, as well as a route back in to look again at something that once happened, with a view towards what can.

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<sup>1</sup> Schneider, R. (2011) *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London and New York: Routledge (p180)

<sup>2</sup> Ely, R. (2007) 'Sowing the Seeds — Pre-Zap Years' in: *ZAP twenty-five years of innovation*, Brighton: Zap Arts and QueenSpark Books (p29)

CHRIS ENGMAN



SURFACE  
2013  
PIGMENT PRINT  
42" X 42"  
EDITION OF 6  
COURTESY OF LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES



COMPONENTS  
2015  
PIGMENT PRINT  
42" X 42"  
EDITION OF 6  
COURTESY OF LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

## ARCHIVE OF FRILLS

Jenna Yuanyuan Bao

Lolita fashion is a subculture that is inspired by Victorian aesthetics but takes a new approach, a closet of frills with constant innovation and mix-and-matching. Lolita fashion became prominent in the 1990s in Harajuku, Tokyo, capturing the hearts of many young adults. Nowadays, there are not only established Japanese brands such as Baby the Stars Shine Bright, Angelic Pretty and Juliette et Justine, but also new blood like Lief and Krad Lanrete. As a rapidly evolving cultural phenomenon, lolita fashion includes styles that accumulate overtime as well as themes that aim to preserve yet also revolutionize the past.

An abundance of ruffles with bursts of color and subtle teatime elegance, lolita dresses carry the cupcake or A-line silhouette, with extravagant designs, bright colors and a plethora of accessories. Some girls only dress up for fashion events or meet-ups, while others identify themselves as lifestyle lolitas. To many, the idea of an adulthood fantasy is often repulsive, perhaps linked to the sexual. Individuals mistake the fashion for Nabokov's 1955 book *Lolita* about an underage girl and her sexually obsessed stepfather, though the book and the subculture are in fact unrelated. 'Lolita' is but another name used to reference the beauty of a fair young maiden in this case.

Lolita fashion highlights modesty and avoids the showing of too much skin. There are many sub-styles such as *sweet*, *classic*, *gothic* and *ouji* (prince). The sense of wonder comes from not only the complex cuts and expensive materials used to construct the main piece, whether a one-piece or jumperskirt (jsk), but also makeup, hairdo and accessories. Objects of fascination such as headdresses, scepters and vanity stuffed animal carriers resemble treasures from a present-day cabinet of curiosities. Many of these items come in limited quantities and are only obtained through reservation or are made-to-order over a short period of time. These items stimulate the need to archive so as to create a storage of the *now* that we often neglect when scanning our databases.

The social context of this aesthetically peculiar fashion remains remarkably mysterious and highly volatile. There are hidden connotations beneath the idealization of the extended wardrobe. To be in contact with such an eccentric practice is to embrace a reality that is sophisticated and ingenious because we are not living dolls, but living forms of art. We dress up and have tea parties not only to humor ourselves of a past era that valued chivalry, but also contribute to the now, the ephemera of the current subculture as it builds and develops rapidly in the era of social media explosion and technological advancement.

I remember vividly the excitement of wearing lolita for the first time as I danced along the cobbled streets of the 7th arrondissement in Paris adorned in frills. There were some strange looks, maybe a few compliments or insults, but I simply smiled and considered myself a deliverer and collector of esoteric experiences, a dispersal archive that is part of a larger organism that would never crumble. My outfit, or *coordinate* as lolitas would put it, was certainly out of the norm for many, but I was nevertheless satisfied with the wandering gaze of strangers. This satisfaction did not stem from a sense of 'lack' — a lust for attention or a need to make a statement. It was simply an impulse

to create something, to transform the self and to act upon the word 'archive,' to make use of exterior dissonance and harmonize the space of our living and to react to our reality in order to accumulate 'sense' as a seeker and facilitator.

The rush hour train came to a stop and a humbly dressed Parisian gentleman passed me by. "Magnifique." He tipped his hat and soon disappeared into the crowd.

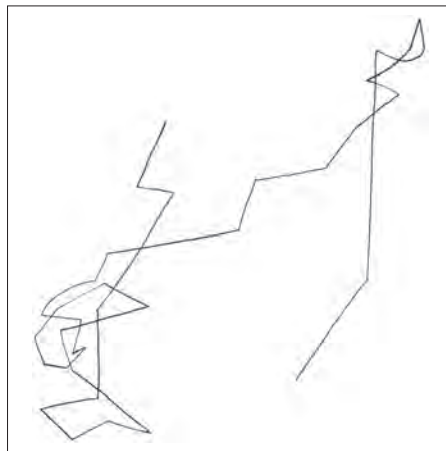
Lolitas are often seen at cultural centers and visitor locations such as art museums, amusement parks and aquariums. We stroll along the shops of Little Tokyo in Los Angeles in search of another — one that belongs to our herd. The desire to embrace a world of fairytales and kawaii elements could be derived from childhood fantasy as it allows for the continuation of creative innocence. Many may argue that innocence is but a temporary concept, like a fresh blouse washed for the first time. However, the transition into adulthood encompasses the practice of managing storages, the ability of



## ARCHIVE OF FRILLS

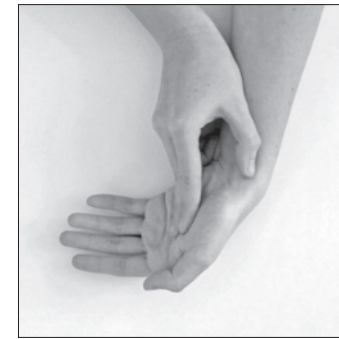
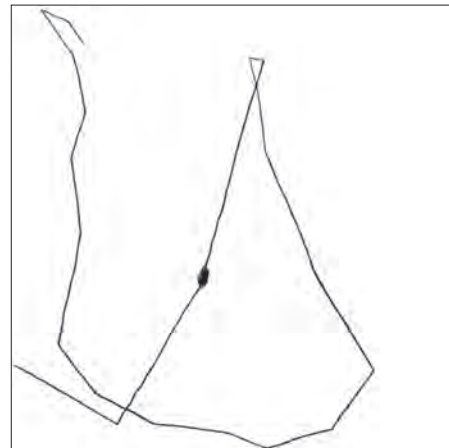
picking and choosing from certain moments and building upon those points of departure. It is an open document and ever-morphing display of the core ego, a corridor of many connected stairways.

Lolita fashion advocates artistic freedom and forges an updatable archive of an otherwise enigmatic subculture. As lolitas we seek to create dynamic spontaneity in the growing community and announce a new form of decadence, one that involves luxurious commodities but not the death of a practice or chronicled space. A day gone by is but another performance as we continue to live this beautiful, undying reverie.



THE POWER OF MOVEMENT IN  
PLANTS I – IIII  
(RETRACING DARWIN, 1880)  
2015  
BRASS  
24" X 24"

ANNE GURO LARSMON



ONE HUNDRED GESTURES FROM ONE HUNDRED  
WATCH ADVERTISEMENTS (1901 – 2000)  
2013  
SINGLE CHANNEL VIDEO, WITHOUT SOUND  
5 MINS 32 SEC

EMILY SHANAHAN

## EXPLODED CONTEMPORARY

Kirsten Cooke

In *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating* edited by Jens Hoffman (2013), the curator Joao Ribas answers the question: *What to do with the Contemporary?* Ribas' response is that curating hasn't actually dealt with its contemporaneous position, which he states is situated within the dialectic of the past and present. This is due to his assessment that:

...despite a central fact the history of curating evinces: how exhibition practices have functioned as the 'archive' of the contemporary, as 'the systems that governs the appearance of statements' in the Foucauldian sense, and as such, how they structure the contemporary as a historical and institutional object.<sup>1</sup>

This suggests that curating frames and freezes the contemporary as an institutional object for thought, whilst also promoting the contemporary as an expanded present, highlighting that both curating and the contemporary are temporal constructs that exist inconsistently within the assumed logic of an unfolding linear time.

Exhibitions are synonymous in structure with the contemporary, as within a linear time frame both are positioned somewhere between the past and future. Exhibitions and the contemporary exist as a cut between past and future; the present — like the boundary between waves and shore — does not actually exist in a stable form. Counter to this, curatorial practice is also understood as a form of signposting, which designates the value of certain objects within the unstable present. This then turns the contemporary exhibition into an institutional object for thought through the documentation and archiving of an exhibition. Stabilizing the meaning of the exhibition and the art objects within it paradoxically reduces the exhibitions and the artworks present to existing in the past. It becomes necessary, therefore, to question both this notion of linear time and the contemporary, which is the forever present, within curatorial practice itself.

In *The Curator's Egg*, Karsten Schubert highlights the contradictory nature of the contemporary and how its very construction is related to the rejection of the past:

Gertrude Stein's critique of MoMA, that one could either be modern or a museum but not both simultaneously, holds true to this day for all museums of contemporary art... When the Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929 the terms 'modern' and 'contemporary' were virtually synonymous in the minds of most observers. Gradually the meaning of the two terms pulled apart, as Barr's 'comet' became tail-heavy.<sup>2</sup>

To collect and archive is to be concerned with preserving the past for the future, which simultaneously cuts out the present or the contemporary. Barr's 'comet', which was meant to storm into the future with a short-lived tail by feeding de-accessions to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, became stunted by a long and concrete tail that cut to the future, limiting its consideration of the plastic present. Indeed what is contemporary now will become a past form and even the term may change in the future, pushing the forever temporal, or present, firmly into the past.

In contradistinction to this preoccupation with the past, present and future, Quantum Mechanics and the theory of Relativity put into doubt such spatial and teleological terms. If subjects and objects are experiencing different time frames and spatial confrontations, then there cannot be an overarching processional concept of time within exhibition practice.

Time and space are pluralized and contingent, which flattens out a time that has no origin and creates an entirely different field for the staging of art works and exhibitions. A de-territorialized field that destabilizes the notion of the contemporary produces the following question: Which curatorial and artistic practices can respond to the notion of contingency and the enveloping or multiplication of time and space without reproducing an obsession with the past, present or future?

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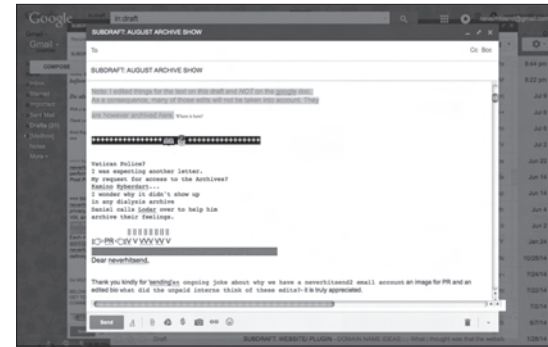
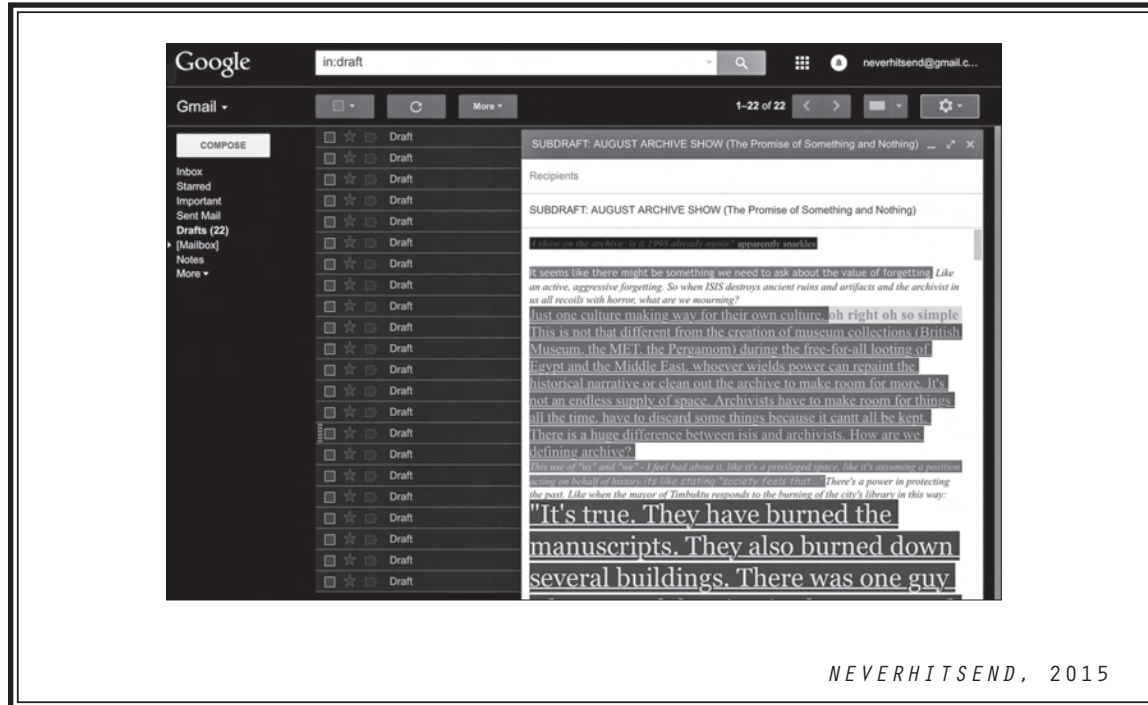
<sup>1</sup> Hoffman, Jens ed. (2013) *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, Milan: Mousse Publishing (p97)

<sup>2</sup> Schubert, K. (2002) *The Curator's Egg*, Manchester: Cornerhouse (pp47-49)

*neverhitsend* is an 8 to 12 person collective that formed in July 2013 in response to Edward Snowden's public disclosure of the NSA's surveillance programs. Our first collective action was to open a Gmail account. The password was distributed orally and through handwritten notes. Two members met below a four-faced clock in a train station. A scrap of notebook paper with a riddle and a drawing exchanged hands.

No inbox ever really starts clean; auto-generated instructions from Gmail on how to use the new account awaited us. We started typing. Gmail autosaves every few seconds.

Every moment you spend drafting an email, each time you think, type, copy, paste, change your mind, have a change of heart, hit command Z, Y, and Z again — it's all sent to the drafts folder, each version assigned its own unique URL and stored on Google's servers. As thoughts materialize on screen, it is easy to assume that they are unread until sent. There is nothing private about electronic communication and yet we somehow repeatedly succumb to a fiction of privacy. *Tear up that handwritten letter to your ex-lover!* This is not an old spy film — the archive is instant, unflattering, and automatic.



In private, each organizer of the collective opened the same single email, saved as a draft that was never meant to be sent. This is a re-performance of a now outdated method of covert communication that was used by Al Qaeda as well as by General David Petraeus and biographer Paula Broadwell.\* Our Draft could be read, trolled, added to, edited, deleted, or reformatted by any and all members. Material was generated and an archive accrued. New content appeared at the top, the bottom, and within each others' texts, in a different color or only visible when highlighted. It was impossible to communicate in real time, scrolling up and down endlessly to find the answer to a question posted weeks ago.

Each login was a chance to perform a version of ourselves, attempt anonymity, and mimic one another. Who was writing passive aggressive messages in pink serifs with blue highlight? That was me. We sometimes signed our names and sometimes denied activity. Who was spamming? Who was misspelling otherwise articulate thoughts about the differences between security and privacy? Sometimes I responded to my own rants. Who made that awful joke about the

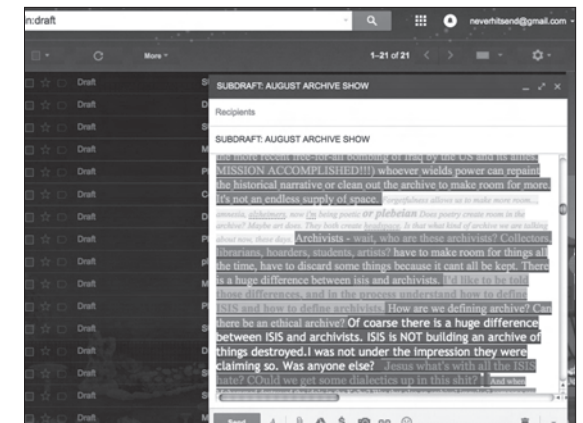
artist none of us like? I'm afraid they can always tell it's me. I trolled. So did I. And I still do. Rude. There is no singular experience of the Draft.

Somewhere within the Draft there is evidence of a mutiny, of inactivity, of dis-membership, of security updates, romance, and vulnerability. The Draft continues to function as an archive of attempts. We've been incorrectly using Gmail for two years. We had to open another Gmail account to send emails.

*neverhitsend* created a new Draft to discuss *The Promise of Something and Nothing*, to talk about archives, and to decide if we wanted to "produce activity/inactivity."<sup>^</sup>

\* *neverhitsend* (Mission Statement, December 14, 2013)

<sup>^</sup> A. Harezlak (personal email communication, April 29, 2015)





(FROM LEFT) IN LOCO PARENTIS;  
UNTITLED; PRESIDENT SHOT  
2015  
MONOPRINT, INK ON PAPER  
19" X 12.5"

FATHERLESS



## FIVE STOREY PROJECTS: A COLLECTIVE LOOK AT A CURATORIAL COLLABORATION

Ann Harezlak, Una Hamilton Helle  
and Ellen Greig

### THEN AND NOW

Five Storey Projects' (FSP) status as an entity isn't quite clear. Despite its founders' continuous efforts to define, configure and analyze it, it never really seemed to be.

As a collective unit, three of the founding members of FSP hereby respond to the supposed 'archive' of their practice, held in disparate places publicly and privately. Commencing with their first group email, they are reminded that FSP in its infancy was comprised of six members. Their exchange re-opens years of stored emails with numerous ideas for exhibitions, shared texts, jokes, questions about how to purchase display units, electrician contact details, and images of artists' works enjoyed; the dialogue which culminated in FSP's collective program of realized and unrealized projects. The public remnants of FSP's program currently only exist on a basic website for the easy navigation of the various projects and is limited to press releases, a downloadable publication, installation shots and the inevitable 'about us' section. Ephemera produced and gathered by FSP throughout the years also includes printed invitation

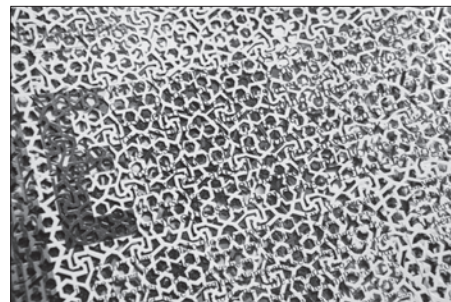
cards, artists' business cards, scribbled meeting minutes and receipts for works production — all kept in domestic spaces in London and Los Angeles. More important now are the friendships and conversations that, over time, have progressed into new ways of working — both collectively and outside of the framework of FSP. Individually, this has formed curators, academics, producers, writers and artists.

The following account is the recorded conversation between three previous members of FSP who, for whatever reason, still share an ongoing dialogue. Perhaps this is, again, an effort to officially close a chapter, and make some sense of what was and is, and — who knows — possibly draw up new collaborative plans.

### 2008 - STORYTELLING

The first FSP email thread in 2008 is an endless attempt of trying to meet up at various private views to talk about a project proposal. We have trouble aligning schedules and try hard to multi-task meetings with exhibition openings. This challenge of needing everyone to be in the same space together characterizes FSP's history, just like any other collaborative group. We were so focused on everyone having their equal say that we would only organise a meeting if everyone could come. Despite this relentless-consensus-ethic, we managed to pull off our first exhibition within a few months.

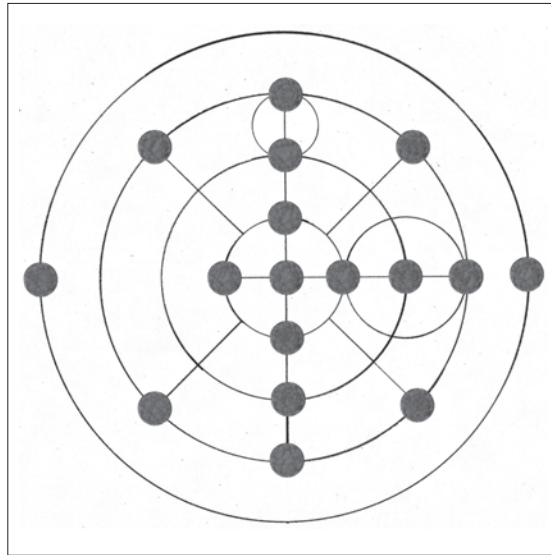
SAMIRA YAMIN



OCTOBER 1, 2001  
2013  
TIME MAGAZINE, ACRYLIC,  
ACRYLIC MIRROR, WOOD

## FIVE STOREY PROJECTS: A COLLECTIVE LOOK

We came from a very self-organised space. In response to all working in small East London commercial galleries, where many of us were working for free, or for very little, we were looking for an alternative way of working with each other and with artists. We sought a way of working that was without hierarchical management systems or rigid financial overheads. Quoting one of our previous notes concerning our first, fully self-initiated project and subsequent 'manifesto' in 2008, we described ourselves as: "a young collective of 5 who are all involved with art through either making it, curating it or writing about it. We all met through our background in the commercial gallery sector, where dialogue and the exchange and development of ideas about art is the main objective. We are interested in incorporating an element of fluidity to our exhibitions in terms of events, interventions, critical thinking and an engagement with the environment within which the work is set.



All our projects will be run as not-for-profit. This will be our first project together."

Quite a bold statement for commencement of our first project together. We might also mention that we came together out of a shared interest but also from distinctly different cultural backgrounds. This was never a topic or crutch for our collaboration, however it did provide the collective with a diverse voice and would have potentially helped when completing applications for funding!

I think we all, idealistically, agreed that art shouldn't function as a legitimiser for essentially commercial goods through intellectualisation. In its simplest form, we thought it should be about exploring ideas that don't necessarily have a forum or function in other areas. The idea that there would be six curators (one member left the group shortly after its formation) curating one exhibition didn't strike us as difficult as we were so used to negotiation in the galleries we then worked within. Our first exhibition, *Matter Of Time*, was in response to the space it was exhibited in, a grand Victorian warehouse in East London, already regulated for an inevitable future of luxury flats. We invited seventeen artists, who we encouraged to actively engage with "spatiality, its raw material state, its history and its location". Although pertinent themes, the brief of the exhibition was unequivocally loose. The curator's statement said: "Arrogantly, or perhaps naively, we chose to work with almost totally unexpected and potentially thoroughly non-relatable outcomes".

In looking back objectively, I notice how much of our initial conversations and ideas were in reaction to a real shift in market value, professionalisation and regeneration of East London. And I think we were trying to resist this shift, as well as acknowledge our inherent role within it. Artists Julia Cabtree and William Evans had recently started living in this warehouse, with the hope of forming an artist-lead project space (which, after our

inaugural show, they did so very successfully). This site became the backbone of our exhibitions concerns and allowed us to experiment and work closely with a community of artists, some of whom were fairly underrepresented at the time. We continued to work with many of these artists in other capacities and projects as our careers grew. For example, *They Are Here*, whose practice and response is included in *The Promise of Something and Nothing*, also occupied a space — reproduced an imminent ideal construction — as artists in *Matter of Time* in 2008.

### 2009 - CALL AND RESPONSE

Until an art critic categorised us as a 'curatorial collective' in late 2008 I don't think we were collectively projecting what we were doing as 'curating', rather, we were making exhibitions, facilitating events, etc. This categorisation and subsequent shift in the way we spoke about what we did, led to a type of programming that was essentially centered around response to an influx of invitations from organisations and institutions. In the same way, that ideas for a project would form directly from an interest in a particular artist's practice, calling us to respond. These next steps for FSP were a fluid, if hectic, process, both in relation to FSP and how art practices were coping with an increasingly sped-up version of the world, an overload of references, opinions, information. Our next exhibition addressed

## FIVE STOREY PROJECTS: A COLLECTIVE LOOK

this: *It's a Mess and Most Probably Irreversible* features artists who are unrestrained by the boundaries of medium for they engage in analogous methods of practice where flexible parameters create outcomes that are not immediately classifiable. Again, our programming was about addressing an ensuing void rather than a particular substance — it was all about trying to make sense of the mess! This sentiment was shared with the artists we were working with. Ellie Harrison's project *Know Your Thinkers & Theorists*, translated a year-long effort to learn the history of philosophy into classifying charts. Similarly, FSP made a website to host our activities, to find order in themes and to identify links that were appearing in our practices. We also lost a member of the group to her PhD.

Facilitated perhaps by the diversity of our collective voice, we began to recognise the importance of live art events within our programming. Our two exhibitions to date had included live sound performances as well as performative video talks and historical walks. The interdisciplinary nature of our thinking (and within this a comment on hierarchical categories of supposed high/low culture) was brought into subsequent projects. *The Object of the Attack* was a series of events at the David Roberts Art Foundation that took their cue from JG Ballard's short story by the same name.

The origin of the differing events note the inclusion of a slightly esoteric manifesto in Ballard's text, charged with concepts that function within an alternative perception of reality and question how artistic practice may be an illustration of the idea of alternative universes... the artist as the spiritual transmitter of imagination. Art is thus regarded as its own belief-system, one where behaviour can border on worship, where objects are regarded with reverie and where the existence of an intricate set of rules and symbols can create new systems of value and produce a catalyst for change. ...*Creating passage into a 'parallel universe'.*

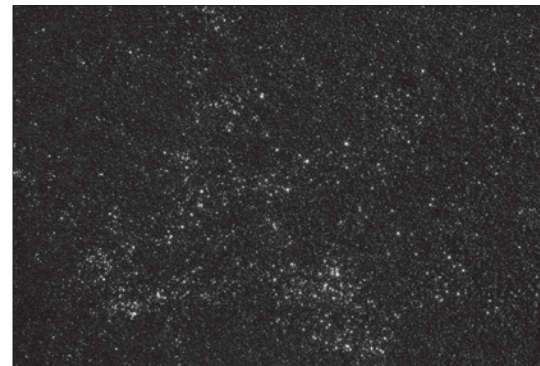
This was how we spoke about the project, which included a video portrait of a poltergeist hunter, lectures on conspiracy theories and the transcendental qualities of noise music and manipulative language.

### 2010 - REMOTE VOICES

Our voices became the tool for programming a day of Charlie Woolley's *Radio Show* at London's SPACE in *Are You Experienced (?)*. The radio show now sits on Soundcloud and begins with another spoken statement defining FSP. It was a program beginning again with the idea of change. We exchanged conversation with Jacqui McIntosh and Susan MacWilliam while inviting pieces such as Matthew MacKisack's *Arguing in Tongues*. We first played *Ride My See-Saw* by the Moody Blues, alongside Mongolian throat singing.

This, for me, also highlights the beginning of my work in ephemera archives and understanding the 'value' of the material. We had two projects this year and they both centered around response and events. *MO·VE·MENT\*\** invited three artists to occupy a space and question a conclusive event and an environment that acknowledges challenging sites of historic inquiry and hauntingly displaced declarations in time. This exhibition is monumental but ultimately momentary. Here we were again at the

Victorian warehouse from 2008, now called James Taylor Gallery, and our program was part of a much larger installation of exhibitions and events. Our press release became instead a poetic definitive discussion on moment and movement. The three invited artists occupied the gallery for a week each and changed how we understood and interacted with the space as well as the discourse they brought within their work itself.



OMG, IT'S FULL OF STARS  
2014  
PVC PELLETS ON FLATSCREEN MONITOR  
36" X 66"  
COURTESY OF KOPEIKIN GALLERY

KEVIN COOLEY &  
PHILLIP ANDREW LEWIS



ODDITY  
2014  
TORCHED BLACK RECORD VINYL  
3.5" X 3" X 2"  
COURTESY OF KOPEIKIN GALLERY

## FIVE STOREY PROJECTS: A COLLECTIVE LOOK

### 2011 - INDEPENDENT AND COLLECTIVE

Five Storey Projects is a collaborative curatorial organisation that investigates contemporary art and curatorial practice as a singular aesthetic within the exhibition and event format. Established in 2008 as a source for active debate amongst its four members' differing practices, Five Storey Projects' practice develops ideas and curatorial programmes through open engagement and sustained dialogue that

hopes to commingle and question the porous boundaries between art and other discourses.

Set about by a set of action guidelines, whose catalyst was our previous member still underway with her PhD, was the exhibition and publication: *For Inclusion in the Syllabi* — a body of research that reflects our individual concerns and thus extends our collaborative and individual practices. In relation to the constraints of communication and translation, alternative models of social and political discourse will develop within the basis of our investigation into modes of

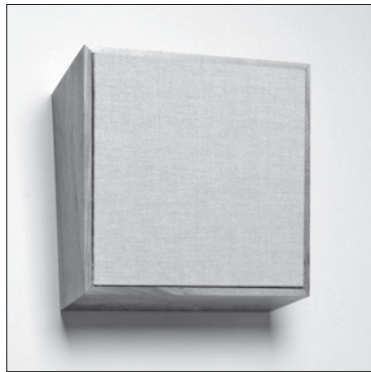
collaborative practice. Our working practices were shown publicly as a diagram, an image that developed over the course of our project during that year. Accompanied by copious text, some more explanatory than others, it was a different way of defining who FSP was. We had a discussion about art speak and obfuscation (itself an impenetrable word) in relation to the publication text. How direct do we want to be? What hierarchies are at play in the way we write and how can we speak of engaging socially and politically when language so obviously demarcates us as part of a certain societal segment — our texts seemingly inaccessible to some. Entrenched in the often commercial world of curating and fairs, I found it a safe haven to stretch my wings and further my own interests in the archival organism. Elements of my tangential research were kept on a hidden web link, only found on the printed press release. This link is now accessed by trawling through downloaded text on the site. Though not an intentional distancing, it does still question accessibility. What and who the diagram represented was never spelled out publicly, even though it was so integral to the exhibition. It outlined the devised curatorial method. Our initial 'void' — our organisation of the mess — had gone full circle (literally) into this diagram. We aimed to interrogate our perceived passiveness by devising a curatorial structure that gave both individual authorship to each member of FSP but also relinquished control over the process by assigning a curatorial function to each of

the invited artists, asking them to invite a contributor of their choosing for an accompanying publication. Four writers were also chosen collectively by the four members of FSP. This system was also a means to explore how, and if, our curatorial practices still aligned. And in one very tangible outcome, one member of the group, maybe tellingly, subsequently left FSP for work/life commitments.

### 2012 - DRIFTING

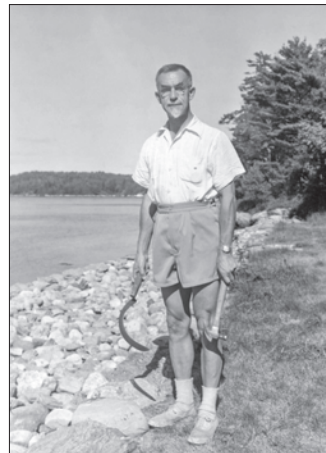
At the end of 2011 and the start of 2012, Una started to think about how we could address alternative ways of distributing and mediating what we do, suggesting that we work with artists on online/digital commissions, which would be hosted on our website. This marked a beginning of thinking around ways of communicating our previous work and thinking about an online presence, rather than actively working on new projects. We discussed not using our press releases and organising our research differently. We wrote a grant proposal for the first time titled *Beyond this Horizon* but for various reasons it was never followed up after completion. Living in Oslo that year and even with the supposed ease of communication technologies available, I found it hard to exchange ideas that weren't related to a specific project or deadline.

HEYWARD HART



9 TO 5  
2015  
WALNUT, LINEN, AUDIO RECORDING  
13" X 13" X 7.5"  
8 HOURS

COMRADE F.  
2015  
HIGH CARBON PIGMENT PRINT  
7" X 5"



## FIVE STOREY PROJECTS: A COLLECTIVE LOOK

FSP had always worked best for me when we were sharing the same city. We were all content that FSP was moving forward in our minds. We still came up with unpublished versions for our uncertain future: Five Storey Projects is a three-person strong collaborative curatorial organisation that investigates contemporary art and curatorial practice as a singular aesthetic within the exhibition and event format.

### 2013 - THE END TO THE BEGINNING

Ellen suggests that Five Storey Projects will change to FSP. However, the idea of changing Five Storey Projects' identity — facilitated by a name change — happened without re-evaluation. I also suggested that FSP might even be put to rest, yet still be in circulation — movement — through an online archiving/evaluation process. We constantly gave each other homework, homework that was never completed. Ellen wrote: Website: An expanding archive of our work. This is a space that does not really expand upon or explain our way of working, our interests or our projects very well. It seems like a gallery with press releases with no space to anchor them in. I think we need to interrogate the way we preserve these projects, the way we learn from them and their continuing relevance/irrelevance to us now. Around this time I scribbled down 'If FSP is dead does that make our website a graveyard?'

I looked back at emails that addressed the future of the collective. Much discussion was on how to change the way we recorded/presented our history online and how it was accessed/organized. We were reflecting on five years of collective work but now looking backwards at the process. Do we again transition our name and even our logo? How would this be understood online and how could additional elements be integrated? It was now not so much a promotional tool but instead a documentation that needed to be readdressed within the limitations of the medium chosen. We wrote in 2013: Alternative modes of dissemination are not alternative anymore; part of current structure and systematized such as the symposium, panel debates, talks etc. Always in flux, we tried to redefine. How can this be represented through our documentation? From 2008, the idea of the practice as nomadic had followed course. We also wrote in 2013: FSP's links and parallels to Nomadic cultures: Where are FSP's histories recorded? As opposed to the cultural depository of museum. Nomadic as a characteristic element of economy and society. Look at elevated female status in nomadic cultures. We were often debating the necessity of addressing the fact that we were all women — at the same time as trying to resist it. Nomadic peoples were historically responsible for transmitting technologies between cultures...their attacks induced change on societies that could have remained static otherwise.

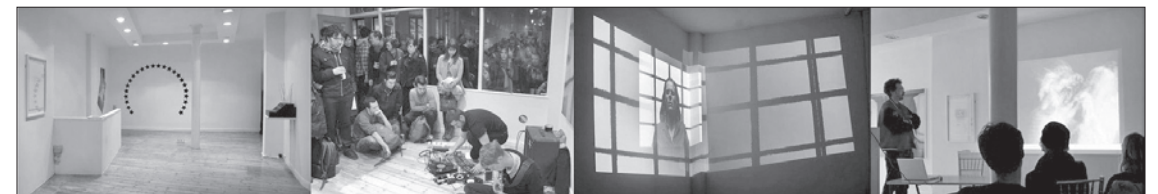
With the different geographies we have been based in — London, Liverpool, Sydney, Oslo and Los Angeles — we have had to adapt ourselves technologically. How to keep a dialogue going through time zones and different economic and social environments as well as personal careers? We looked at burying the project, but everything that is buried can be exhumed. We spoke of a viking-style burning boat sacrifice to pass it on to the afterlife: maybe just as a .gif, but still, this would leave no confusion as to whether FSP was over or not. No conclusion to this was made.

### 2014–2015 - PRESENT VOICE

We talked about ourselves in past tense. Since 2011 nothing tangible had happened to publicly address. Although as a working group and forum for exchanging ideas, or even support, we were still active. Still, the 'public' time lapse seemed too wide to justify.

I then offered a collective way to open communication (through our documentation) and readdress the probable mess that is, was and could be FSP. Ideas between us continue to germinate. An online journal is in the making. We seem unable to not work together, but the consensus is that our next endeavour will not be as FSP. See you in our next incarnation.

MATTER OF TIME, 2008



IT'S A MESS AND MOST PROBABLY IRREVERSIBLE, 2009



## KIRSTEN COOKE

Kirsten Cooke is a curatorial candidate in the final year of her PhD at the University of Reading and a visiting lecturer at Chelsea College of Arts and the University of Reading. Cooke's research explores resistant strategies, through curatorial and literary practices, in the wake of neo-liberal mechanisms that have subsumed identity politics and the ontological value of art. *Material Conjectures* (a platform co-founded by Cooke in 2011 with Sheffield artist Dr. Dale Holmes) is an exercise in transparency through which contested authorial positions of artists and curator are at stake. *KollActiv* (co-formed with LA-based curator Ann Harezlak in 2014) explores the divisions of material, artwork and archival, through reconsidered and hybridized methodologies. Cooke's curated exhibitions include: *Kwartz Kapital Konstruktion Kollider*, London; *Asymmetrical Cinema*, London; *One Dimensional Disco*, kynastonmcshine, London and the series of *Turbulent Surfaces* (2010–2012) events at kynastonmcshine, London and Brooke Theatre, Kent.

## KEVIN COOLEY & PHILLIP ANDREW LEWIS

Through photography, video, and installation, Kevin Cooley's work is a meditation on our evolving relationship with technology, nature, and ultimately each other. Cooley works with elemental forces beyond his control, addressing how these forces contend with each other, and how we exist among them, using his experiences and direct interventions to provide the underlying conceptual framework of his practice. Cooley's video work was recently featured in solo exhibitions at the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR; The Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA; Ryan Lee and Pierogi, New York City and Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles. His work is in prominent collections including 21C, the Nelson-Atkins Museum, and the Guggenheim Museum and it has been reviewed in *Aesthetica*, *Artforum*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Hyperallergic*, *Time Out New York* and *Whitewall Magazine*. Cooley lives and works in Los Angeles.

Phillip Andrew Lewis is a conceptually-based artist working in various mediums including photography, video and installation. His works often respond to historical events, psychology and phenomenology. Lewis received a 2012 Creative Capital Grant in Visual Art and has received generous support from the Foundation for Contemporary Art in New York, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, The Center for Creative Photography, Tennessee Arts Commission, MakeWork, University of Tennessee and the Urban Arts Commission. Phillip currently teaches at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga.

Cooley and Lewis met and began collaborating during their residency at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, NE. Their work has been shown at Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles; Zeitgeist Gallery, Nashville; Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn; Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Rapids and Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park. They released a limited edition phonograph and print box set as part of their project *Harmony of Spheres*.

## KLAUS DAUVEN

Klaus Dauven graduated from Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, Germany and The Academy of Fine Arts in Münster, Germany. His training includes the École des Beaux-Arts, France and the Frans Masereel Centrum, Belgium. Dauven is the recipient of the Award of the Development Corporation of the Art Academy Münster; Joseph and Anna Fassbender Prize of the city of Brühl; Art Prize of the City of Düren and Art Prize of Kreis Düren. With several published catalogues, his solo exhibitions include: Leopold Hoesch Museum and Paper Museum, Düren, Germany; Gossa Walking Museum, Japan; Galerie Mülhaupt, Köln, Germany. He has been commissioned for public artworks internationally in Germany, South Korea, Japan and Belgium. Dauven lives and works in Kreuzau, Germany.

## CHRIS ENGMAN

Chris Engman has shown internationally including exhibitions at: 68 projects, Berlin; Flowers Gallery, London; Torrance Art Museum, CA; Project B, Milan and Institute of Contemporary Art, CA. His works have been featured in solo exhibitions including: Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle; Luis De Jesus Los Angeles; Gayle & Ed Roski Gallery, Los Angeles; Clair Gallerie, Munich and Joshua Tree, CA. Engman's work is held in collections including: The Orange County Art Museum, Seattle Art Museum, The Henry Art Museum, Houston Fine Arts Museum, the Microsoft Collection and Sir Elton John Collection. Engman is represented by Luis De Jesus Los Angeles and Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle. Engman lives and works in Los Angeles.

## FATHERLESS

Fatherless is a collaborative print posse from the midwestern United States featuring five artists (Corey Hagberg, Jarrod Hennis, Javier Jimenez, Greg Lang and Dave Menard) with a counter-intuitive approach to screen printing and artist collaboration. Formed in Rockford, Illinois (2010), Fatherless has developed a methodology exploring each other's imagery and the recontextualization of the current consumer driven social climate. What began as impromptu has since been recognized as their "Visual Mixtape of Creative Shenagination". Published in *Huffington Post*, *Dazed*, the *Guardian* and *People of Print*. Exhibitions include: Print Club London; Rockford Art Museum, IL; Fountain Art Fair, NY & Chicago; Multiples Art Fair, Chicago and Pick Me Up, London.

## ELLEN GREIG

Ellen Greig is a curator and writer based in London. Most recently she was Curator in Residence at LUX Artists' Moving Image, London. She was Assistant Curator at Liverpool Biennial 2014, where she worked with artists Bonnie Camplin, Aaron Flint Jamison, Angie Keefer, Hassan Khan and Peter Wächter, among many others. Recent curatorial projects include: *Notes on the vertiginou & Vertigo*, Flat Time House (2015); *A Picture is no Substitute*, Seventeen Gallery (2014); *In the presence of multiple possibilities*, French Riviera 1988 (2012). She is a founding member of Five Storey Projects. Ellen has worked as a visiting lecturer at Camberwell College of Arts, London and College of Fine Arts: UNSW COFA, Australia. She holds an MA in Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art, London (2011–13).

## LILY HALL & METTE KJÆRGAARD PRÆST

As an independent curator and writer, Lily Hall's research focusses on alternative exhibition histories and practices as they relate to the production and sharing of knowledge. Between 2012–14 she held curatorial and organizational roles at the exhibitions department of Calvert 22, specialized in art and culture of the 'former-East'.

Mette Kjærgaard Præst's curatorial practice is informed by an interest in production as process, and a dedication to emerging or underexposed practices. Recent projects: *Acting Out*, Nottingham (2015); *Morphologies*, Kunstraum, London (2014–2015); *Dizziness of freedom*, Anxiety Festival, London (2014).

Lily Hall and Mette Kjærgaard Præst are based in London and both hold MAs in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London (2012).

## UNA HAMILTON HELLE

Una Hamilton Helle is an artist whose practice concerns itself with where and how we locate and create meaning for ourselves. This enquiry is inspired by periphery belief systems and subcultures where concepts of the real and imaginary are often intermingled. Recent exhibitions include *Becoming the Forest*, a solo show at Le Bon Accueil, Rennes and *Ascension: more than a feeling*, a commission for the Electric Guitar in Popular Culture conference at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. Her curatorial endeavours currently include devising an artist commissioning project with the British Museum. She is a founding member of curatorial collective Five Storey Projects and collaborative art practice Hal Silver. She holds an MA in Photography & Video from the Royal College of Art, London (2008–10).

## ANN HAREZLAK

Ann Harezlak is a curator and art historian whose independent practice considers the use of archives and ephemera as primary material within exhibitions. Harezlak has assisted in the development of major archival projects at Chelsea College of Art & Design Special Collections (2010–11), Tate Britain Archive (2012–14), the Henry Moore Foundation (2012–13), the Ian Hamilton Finlay & Michael Harvey Archive (2013) and the Ken Cox Archive (2013). Harezlak is a founding member of the collective FSP and KollActiv. Her recent exhibitions and projects include: *Arrive and Likewise Depart*, Sonce Alexander Gallery, CA; *With Gemma Levine & Henry Moore*, Tate Britain, London; *Sent/received: selected cards related to the Nigel Greenwood Gallery, 1969–1974*, Bright Light Journal, London. She holds an MA in Critical Writing and Curatorial Practice, University of the Arts London (2009).

## HEYWARD HART

Heyward Hart graduated with his MFA in Photography from Yale University (2011) and was granted the Richard Benson Prize as well as the Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Fellowship. He has shown at PØST, CA; 950 Hart Gallery, NY; Aviary Gallery, MA; Current Space, MD and The Basement Gallery, TN. Solo exhibitions include: Graham Student Union, NC; Public library of Brookline, MA and Hanes Art Center, NC. Hart lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

## ANNE GURO LARSMON

Anne Guro Larsmon received her MFA from California Institute of the Arts (2013) and studied at Bergen National Academy of the Arts and Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design. Exhibitions include: Michael Thibault Gallery, Los Angeles; Charlottenborg Kunsthall, Denmark; Inter Art Center, Sweden; Kunstbanken Hedmark, Norway. Her artist's book *THE POWER OF MOVEMENT IN PLANTS* was published by Golden Spike Press. Larsmon is based in Los Angeles and Oslo, Norway.

## NEVERHITSEND

*neverhitsend* is an interdisciplinary collective that performatively researches communications ideology with a particular focus on issues involving privacy, surveillance, and anonymity. The group uses an in-progress draft in a shared Gmail account as a platform for discussion, continuously re-performing a tactic once employed by Al Qaeda, General Petraeus and Paula Broadwell to maintain secret communication. Past projects have been shown at 356 Mission, CA; Monte Vista Projects, CA; and in VIA Publication, Los Angeles. The group recently launched *Toggle*, an international digital Fellowship that takes place on a browser plugin, with the support of 221a, the International Symposium of Electronic Art, and the British Columbia Arts Council in Vancouver, Canada.

## EMILY SHANAHAN

Emily Shanahan received her MFA from California Institute of the Arts (2013) and BFA from Concordia University, Montreal, QC. Her work has been shown in New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, Singapore, and Norway. She was an artist in residence at the Vermont Studio Center for the Arts in 2010, as well as a 2012 participant in Tropical Lab 6, Singapore. Her artist's book *The Tick vs. The Hum* was published by Golden Spike Press. Shanahan lives and works in New York.

## COLIN PATRICK SMITH

Colin Patrick Smith graduated from Yale University (2009) with an MFA in Photography and received his BFA from Columbia College Chicago (2005). He received the Ward Cheney Memorial Award for outstanding achievement in composition while at Yale University (2009). Published in *Searching for the Light* and *SOMA*, Smith's work has been featured in numerous galleries including: Capricious Gallery, Brooklyn; Gallery 339, Philadelphia; the Eighth Veil, Los Angeles. He has also shown in exhibitions *Arrive and Likewise Depart* and *The Nature of Painting and Photography* at Sonce Alexander Gallery, Los Angeles. Smith lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

## THEY ARE HERE

They Are Here (2006) is a collaborative practice steered by Helen Walker and Harun Morrison. They are project-based artists that often set up situations that unfold across a number of years. Their work can be read as a series of context specific games. The entry, invitation or participation can be as significant as the game's conditions and structure. Past projects have been developed with: Camden Arts Centre, Chisenhale Gallery, South London Gallery, Tate Modern, Whitechapel Gallery, all London, CCA Glasgow, Grand Union, Birmingham and STUK, Belgium. They are based in Birmingham and London.

## SAMIRA YAMIN

Samira Yamin received her MFA from the University of California, Irvine (2011) and BA from University of California, Los Angeles (2006). Exhibitions include: Santa Monica Museum of Art, CA; Craft and Folk Art Museum, CA; Charlie James Gallery, CA; Camera Club of New York, NY and the Ben Maltz Gallery at OTIS College, CA. In 2014 she was awarded a Rauschenberg Residency and has been an artist in residence at Djerassi Resident Artists Program and Headlands Center for the Arts. Yamin lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

## JENNA YUANYUAN BAO

Jenna Yuanyuan Bao received her MFA from Art Center College of Design (2014) and has studied at École des Beaux-Arts, France (2013-2014). Also known as *Lady Ehri*, Bao inspires lolita subculture with her innovative coordinates and has been featured in the *Kawaii Around the World* product series starring international J-fashion icons. Bao is a moderator of the Los Angeles lolita community and a frequent host and sponsorship advisor of North America's largest lolita tea parties and related events including *The Magic of Kurage Hime* (2015); *A Walk in the Garden* (2015) and *A Waltz with Roses* (2014). Her practice has been shown in Los Angeles, Missoula and Paris. Bao currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

*THE PROMISE OF SOMETHING AND NOTHING.*

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