

Archives have problems. In the same way that language fails; but tries. It is all in the trying, I tell myself. **It is more of a mere gesture than a grasp.** The words are never quite enough. I realized that you gave up on me a long time ago. Long before I knew. You dismantled our archive and the words came crashing through. My mind altered our library. Photographs were re-exposed with different images. Cut up and re-collaged. It is starting to fall back in-line; in-frame; into-place. The dust is settling.

*Somebody left a mark of their finger... so I scanned, repeated... re-produced.*¹

I am trying to listen to all of the voices at once. I am stretching my language and my thinking between different places and different times. I wasn't there so I cannot fully understand. I am torn in too many directions at once and the language lurches through holes in my body into cracks in the pavement. And I'm desperately breathing words off the floor in an attempt to attain it all. What if the sentence that gives me the most clarity has already disappeared before I can read it? In an effort to digest as many words as possible, whole letters fall out of phrases. I watch them blow away in the wind. They will blow back to me when I need them, I hope. Images are just as slippery.

Shelves and pictures. The end of the roll of film and the last image that the scanner scanned; the working table. *The foretelling or prediction of what is to come.*² The conceptuality of the work functions in the same way that making is intuitive to the maker. The meanings, like sentences, roll into one another as the maker makes, as the conversation gathers momentum. The roll unravels, but the paper has a memory. All that gets mixed up in the archiving, in the historicizing and then in the digitizing; the work still struck me. Formations and salutations. Inscriptions whispering to creators, centuries past. *[A]rchaeology sang a small song to itself in the suburbs outside the city.*³ The large prints serenade memories of past makers in the dark room. Sonnet of phosphorescent light through chemical refrain; collaborations of sound and sight.

Hand-woven *millefleurs*—their origin not yet fully defined. There was a delicacy to them⁴ that was unexpected, wrapped up in secrets of the past. Can I still refer to them as memories if they are not my memories? *[T]here is no future that remains untouched by the whispering pass of our many pasts.*⁵ Sitting down for one full pass. Still, I believe that art has the capacity to reimagine objects and experiences.

Creating an inventory of images; she scans, exposes and repeats. It is all in the repetition and the marks that come up by mistake. The differences that ensue, through repetitive process, are only evident to the one who carries out the action. *[T]he erasure cannot measure up to its own expectations.*⁶

I look at the images and the matter is displaced. Origin or archive interrupted and I am wondering where I came from and where I am going to; where I will end up. If I lay down on the scanning bed, what will be transferred, exposed and illuminated? The archaeologist's dusting brush is exchanged for cold glass of scanning bed.

It is time for the images to wake up. *You expose in complete darkness, no light at all ... you can't tell when your transparencies are folded ... it's all haptic.*⁷ The familiar tears that keep on rolling in and down and around. My hands should be worn away by now from wiping saline; fingers puckered from too much salt. I pinch the salt and hear it crack and break in-between fingerprint. *There has always been a compulsion to restore damaged statues to wholeness.*⁸ It's all haptic.

It has a deep history. I have a deep history. My work has a deep history and my body has a deep history. Skin stretches back to past flesh. Blood that runs and beats through cities and photographs and births and heartaches. **It's more of a mere gesture, than a grasp.** It goes deeper still; and I'm awakening to my reservoirs.

— Josephine Mead, 2018

This text was written to accompany Olga Bennett's exhibition *Untitled_ccp_archive.jpg* at the Centre for Contemporary Photograph (Melbourne, 2018)

¹ Olga Bennett, conversation during studio visit with the artist, (Melbourne, April 13 2018).

² Dictionary.com, "prophecy," *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, Random House, accessed April 14 2018, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/prophecy>.

³ Quinn Latimer, *Like a Woman: Essays, Readings, Poems* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 18.

⁴ "The lady and the unicorn", c1500, wool and silk, Collection: Musee de Cluny- Musee national du Moyen Age, Paris. (Viewed at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, April 21 2018).

⁵ Peggy Phelan, "Introduction: The Ends of Performance," in *The Ends of Performance*, ed.

Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (New York: NYU Press, 1997), 6.

⁶ Vincent W.J van Gerven Oei, "Return to Reading," in *Allegory of the Cave Painting*, ed. Mihnea Mircan and Vincent W.J van Gerven Oei (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2015), 205.

⁷ Olga Bennett, conversation during studio visit with the artist, (Melbourne, April 13 2018).

⁸ Michael Graf, "Plunder," [andrewhazewinkel.com](http://www.andrewhazewinkel.com), accessed April 28 2018, <http://www.andrewhazewinkel.com/past/photographic-series/head-replacement-therapy>.