

Annotated Bibliography

Natasha Roberts – 2317127

Merewether, C. 2006. *The archive*. London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, Mass.

This edited volume collects critical writings by artists, theorists, and historians, including Michel Foucault, Hal Foster, and Okwui Enwezor, exploring how archives shape memory, identity, and cultural production. Merewether's introduction positions the archive not as a static record of the past but as a site of continual reinterpretation and political negotiation. The texts examine how archival practices in contemporary art reveal power structures, challenge historical narratives, and generate new meanings through recontextualisation.

Merewether's arguments are persuasive and supported by a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives. The collection's strength lies in its ability to connect theoretical discussion with artistic practice, bridging abstract ideas and tangible creative processes.

This resource is essential for my project as it situates artistic engagement with archives within both historical and conceptual frameworks. It supports my exploration of transforming archival photographs through repetition and fiction, showing how artists use archival material to question truth, authorship, and collective memory.

Derrida, J. 1995. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. University of Chicago Press.

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida examines the philosophical and psychoanalytic dimensions of the archive. Drawing on Freud, he explores the archive as a site of preservation driven by the conflicting impulses of memory and the death drive. Derrida argues that the act of archiving is never neutral, it is bound up with power, authority, and technological mediation. Our urge to archive comes from a need to preserve and make sense of memory, yet no matter how much we collect, something is always missing or forgotten.

Derrida's argument is conceptually dense but profoundly influential. His use of psychoanalysis and deconstruction reveals the archive's unstable relationship with truth and history. While abstract, his ideas remain relevant to contemporary art and digital culture. The limitation lies in its theoretical nature, which can feel detached from visual or material practice.

This text supports the theoretical foundation of my project. It helps me understand how reworking archival photographs involves both preservation and transformation, echoing

Derrida's idea that the archive is always rewriting itself through repetition and reinterpretation.

Burton, A.M. 2006. *Archive stories: facts, fictions, and the writing of history*. Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press.

Archive Stories is a collection of essays that explores how archives are constructed, interpreted, and contested across different historical and geographical contexts. Burton and her contributors reveal that archives are not fixed records but active sites where history is shaped by those who collect, catalogue, and interpret materials. The book blends personal narrative, historical research, and critical theory to examine how race, gender, and colonial power influence archival access and representation.

Burton's approach is compelling because it bridges theory and lived experience. The essays demonstrate that the archive is inherently political, showing how subjectivity and bias shape what is preserved. The essays vary in tone and focus, which can feel inconsistent at times, but that diversity also captures the messy, layered nature of working with archives.

This text aligns closely with my project's interest in fiction and transformation within historical imagery. It reinforces the idea that archives can be reimagined to challenge dominant narratives, allowing me to treat the photographic archive as a space for reinterpreting forgotten or marginalised stories.

Sekula, A. (1986) 'The Body and the Archive.' *October*, 39, pp. 3–64.

Sekula examines how photography has historically been used as a tool of classification and control, particularly in systems of law enforcement and social documentation. He explores how photographic archives have shaped our understanding of identity, normality, and deviance. Sekula reveals the ways in which the photographic image, often assumed to be objective, is instead deeply embedded in structures of power.

His writing is critical and theoretically grounded, yet accessible through its focus on the social function of photography. Sekula's perspective is particularly valuable because it situates the photographic archive within a political framework, exposing how images both reflect and enforce authority.

For my project, Sekula provides a crucial counterpoint to more emotional or personal readings of the archive. His analysis encourages me to consider the ethical dimensions

of working with found photographs and how the act of recontextualisation might resist or reinforce systems of control.

Barthes, R. 1980. Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography. New York: Hill And Wang.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes explores the emotional and philosophical dimensions of photography, focusing on how photographs relate to memory, time, and loss. He introduces the concepts of *studium* - the cultural, intellectual interest of an image and *punctum* - the personal, piercing detail that emotionally “wounds” the viewer. Through a deeply personal reflection on a photograph of his late mother, Barthes positions photography as a medium haunted by death, where every image marks the passing of time and the inevitability of loss.

Barthes’ writing is poetic and subjective rather than analytical, which gives the book both its strength and its limitations. His emotional honesty makes photography feel intimate and human, yet his conclusions are difficult to apply to broader political or archival contexts.

For my project, Barthes provides a framework for understanding photography as a site of memory and absence. His ideas about *punctum* and emotional resonance connect to my interest in reworking archival images to evoke both presence and loss. His notion of photographs as “certificates of presence” supports my exploration of how images hold traces of people, moments, and stories that can be reinterpreted and revived in new contexts.

Berger, J. 1972. Ways of Seeing. London: Penguin.

In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger examines how images particularly in Western art and media shape the way we look at the world. He argues that seeing is not passive or neutral but socially and culturally conditioned. Berger critiques traditional European oil painting and modern advertising, revealing how images often reinforce systems of power, ownership, and gender. His essay on the “male gaze” is particularly influential, showing how women are objectified through visual representation and made to see themselves as they are seen by others.

Berger’s writing is accessible and persuasive, with clear visual examples. Its strength lies in connecting theory to everyday experience.

For my project, Berger's exploration of how meaning is constructed through context and framing is invaluable. His argument that "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" directly supports my interest in reworking archives to expose how narratives are shaped by power and perspective. It reinforces my aim to shift familiar images into new readings, prompting viewers to question what they assume to be true.