

BA Documentary Photography and Visual Activism

Publication and Protest (ADAA5005)

Photobook Proforma

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Critical Analysis of *Stutters* Dominique Hurth (2021)



Fig. 8: Image from Dominique Hurth's *Stutters* (Hurth, 2021)

Dominique Hurth's *Stutters* uses found cyanotype prints by Thomas W. Smillie, the first custodian and curator of the Smithsonian Institution's collection of photography. The Photobook investigates the silences within the archive – Through visual montage, Multi-media, Typography and juxtaposition - making a commentary on whose narratives are preserved and whose are lost within the archive.

Stutters mimics its driving themes of archives, memory and the visual representation of history within its materiality and structure. A sewn-bound paperback with a foldout dust jacket and postcard inserts, both the dust jacket and Postcards offer an interactive and meaningful experience for the viewer – in opening the cover the contact sheets of the images that reside inside the photobook fold out into a large A2 poster, creating an object in which can be mounted and pondered upon alike that of a museum's archive, the same can be said for the postcards. Although, the dust jacket not only provides a certain alternative objectivity to the photobook but also makes a commentary on the images and

concept of *stutters* as if the book itself is relic residing underneath.



Alongside the collection of found imagery that is re-interpreted from Hurth's own commentary on the archive, Hurth (2021) states 'The work presents photographs of empty display cabinets and staged objects within the Smithsonian's holdings, following divergent threads of photographic history, exhibition ship and collection-making' The subject material inside the photobook acts as a Lense into the histography of our modern age. Insisting on narrating the archive, Hurth is nonconforming to archive as repository therefore interprets the cyanotypes and immortalises them within the confines of

objectivity to recontextualise history.



'Stutters' itself is a commentary on the arrangement of the images, with repetitive imagery scattered throughout its pages. Referencing both the nature of the archive and the complex interplay of extrinsic and intrinsic within it. Interpreting this value differently would derive that Hurth was making a direct reference to her practice of xerox and printing reproduction, in which she 'enlarges the world of each image', 'through photography, photocopy, scanning and offset printing' Hurth (2021) - The repetitions and 'stutters' of each image would mimic the process of reproduction, referencing the technique and portraying it within the layout creates a unique tension around physical and intangible this could be seen as a commentary on the digital ramifications at play within the archive.

The art of cyanotypes and their history as historic/scientific process also narrate precision and experimentation, alike the curation of this work, creating a beautiful interplay between the subliminal messages within the context of the collection.

Hurth's, as well as Smillie's, voice is frequented amongst the artifacts and in a concluding chapter of photobook as she 'considers the book's entwined interests, as well as her personal history with the Smithsonian collection and the work of Smillie.' Hurths (2021) This use of mixed-media and

Typography redefines the viewers perspective, perhaps changing it completely, as she derives her own conclusions with 'Additional contributions by authors and curators Ruth Noack and Kari Conte consider the ways in which artists' projects like Stutters can quietly break apart the violent taxonomy of an archive, and instead use this shifting fragmentation to envision new meaning and bring into focus voices that have been excluded from history.' Hurths (2021), This takes a modern twist on an inherently stagnant subject, in theory Hurths has re-imagined history and created her own artifact in place of it, the modernised relic itself curated from collected fragments of a bygone era recontextualised into the modern day, effortlessly portraying what so easily can be forgotten and unseen in history and within the archive.



Indexical Archives: Dischronia is a three-part photobook series in which the collections of three archives are documented onto 35mm black and white film. Through meticulous curation the

photobooks narrate the ebbs and flows of history within the archive, considering Content, materiality and function.

‘Throughout last year, I mused over a certain relic residing in Swansea Museum. A carved stone head effigy weathered beyond recall; residing in a tall mahogany cabinet in the archaeology gallery. This artifact became a catalyst for a second project, honouring *Temporal Reverie: The Unveiling of Alina de Mowbray* (2024), a hyperreal, site-specific exhibition, the project was an ode to this exhibition; *Indexical Archives* (2025) guided by the role of the artifact as *Simulacrum* (Baudrillard, 1981).

Within this framework, I mused over how artifact and archive function together as a vessel of memory, culture and identity. These themes are central to understanding how entropy reshapes the archive.’ Holden (2025)

in a pursuit of destruction of order, I entered spaces of archive and acted upon my flâneuse (Baudelaire, 1863), instinct as wanderer, to destroy the space in which is intended to narrate for view ship. The collections became my own collection of stark monochrome imagery, that resulted in abstracted relics and oddities. The three rolls of film produced all the content for my photobooks.

‘Archives and the act of collection, as explored in *Temporal Reverie* (2024), A relic from Swansea Museum’s archive served as both literal and symbolic artifact, narrating and reinterpreting a story lost in the entropic confines of the archive,’ Holden (2025) alongside its sister, *Dischronia* (2025) who collates a series of archives and artifacts into an unbroken unfolding of history, the ever-folding waterfall of imagery confined in a A5 black hardback accordion book, created to ensure a multi narrative experience.

Aligning with Heidegger’s notion of temporality (Heidegger, 1927), wherein the past is never fully static but exists as a dynamic interplay of unveiling and veiling – This intricate and complex concept fuelled my exploration into temporal photography, that of what is *Fixed*

(2025) and *Unfixed* (2025), ensuring my descent to the darkrooms, in which twin ring bound photobooks were curated. *Unfixed* (2025) is unique to its twin, in which it is light bound, in light the photographs will deteriorate destroying the prints. *Fixed* (2025) is not, it is stagnant and will always remain. The concept behind this is that of temporality and destruction, with a direct reference to the nature of the archive. 'The human desire to preserve both the ephemeral and the inanimate embodies the concept of the archive. deducing from Freud, Derrida leads to the belief that the archive's desire to preserve is dualistically tied with the *death drive* (Freud,1920), which is an entropic force pursuing the destruction of order,' Holden (2025) The vision of the three photobooks was derived from this concept – *Dischronia* announces this duality, by using the art of collection as a commentary not only on preservation of history but also to question the ways in which archives can be used to deconstruct and reconstruct narratives, acknowledging the inherent fragility of the archive and act of collection.

The context and themes of photobooks are encapsulated within its objectivity, materiality and narrative flow; every choice for the sibling books comes from a place of meaning and a desire to capture a viewer in an intimate weaving of reading and exploration.

Dischronia, the first artifact in my trove, the A5 concertina is a distinctive format curated by a single, continuous sheet of paper folded back and forth in a pattern. The pages are unbound, and instead, connected by folds – the hardcover first and last pages bound in noir linen, embossed with the book title on both sides, along with a linen midnight case with the project title embossed as its decoration. *Dischronia* reads multiple ways due to its format as accordion, the book stands to have fifty images on both sides, collating a whole one-hundred documented artifacts and oddities combined when left-turning and right-turning. Leaving the 'correct' way of reading and interpretation up to the audience.

Fixed and *Unfixed* are two A4 twin black ring bound photobooks encased within a black blackout seal, the covers are a dusty rose linen embossed with the titles of each. The black card pages structure the books as they are also boundless alike *Dischronia*. The books are fraternal in the sense that one will change the other will stay the same, in each, ten images reside they are carefully curated stories of two narratives in the archive – the seen and the unseen. Using text, a voice echoes through the collection to narrate the temporality within their pages. The rolls of film used to create this body of work even supply their own narration on the entropic and temporal nature of the archive, Film is veiled then Unveiled through development and is prone to decay depending upon its environment. The decisions throughout my process were intended to be harmonious, working together to derive meaning for the viewers – even in the process of collecting a body of work as the material for my photobooks.

Dischronia's collection of index cards was reworked from my own exhibition 'Indexical archives: *Dischronia*' (2025), in which their intended purpose was to lie scattered and unorganised in an antique index drawer -metaphor for the archive as keeper of knowledge and order a duality to the placement of imagery one conceived of disorder and *death drive*- to be interacted with amongst the guests. The way in which the index cards were retrieved to the end of the exhibitions showing, determined their exact layout in the photobook. Interestingly, a dozen of the cards were lost, I found this to be an unexpected and welcomed progression in my curation of the book due to the nature of collection and the archive. The reworking of the index cards into something new, mirrors how artists narrate and reconceptualise the archive.

The flowing themes of temporality, entropy and conflict in *Dischronia* are whispered in its very making and history. The historical commentary of the concertinas images is not only in the images themselves, but also in the recontextualization of images as objects into images as subject.

Book dummies were curated to test the imagery with the materiality of the photobooks, although during this process I spent time contemplating using binding techniques to convey the binding of narratives within the content. Although, I found the books that were un-bound much more enticing, the conversation of what is boundless and confined played a role in the decision making, I found that many metaphors for boundless created meaning I wanted to encapsulate in my photobooks; 'A story that writes itself'. The archive was my tool in curation; I sought to destroy it and the very thing it hates, disarray. These a multi-narrative tools I have created question on what it means to pursue order and reliability in a fortress of whispers and lies.

I curated a dynamic and unique photobook series. During a three week period I sought out the archives and documented them onto 35mm black and white film, undertook extensive research tasks to inspire my own creation from different artists, I developed my film within a one week period and readied the concertina, I had ordered the accordion online and then added my content and typography. The concertina arrived alongside my established black card and linen rose paper, black binding rings and a large, sealed box – that blocks light out of the space to protect the images. Ensuring timely curation, I processed the film intended to both be fixed and unfixed in the darkrooms ensuring they were completed under red-light. The book dummies hold no semblance to my final structure nor materiality of all my photobook, although they provided an insight into InDesign and binding techniques – they did not motivate many final decisions. The decisions made for my own works derived from the extensive research of inspiring PhotoWorks within the universities own archive, through this research I encountered the multitude of printing techniques – Xerox and Riso being the two I was most interested in. The practicality of Riso printing such a large quantity of prints and in relation to the themes and concepts of the books, lead me to alternative methods of printing. Inks and Papers creating different aesthetic qualities to the body of work, I considered alternative Ink to mimic my image-making as film based - opting for silver ink on

black rice paper, to create a film-like iridescence to the images – the outcome created complexities within the work that deviated from my narrative and concept, the images became sophisticated, the intention of the images is to be honest. The images created for the collections are intended to be modest and authentic. I opted for an original way of print-making true to that of every photographer, Darkroom printing, in light of the experimentation.

The process of this module took strict time-management and decision-making to be able to create an industry standard photobook, in my case photobooks. The reasoning behind this was initially due to my indecision, as a photographer the *decisive moment* (Cartier-Bresson, 1952) is one of significance. Implying that the photographer ‘must be able to anticipate an important moment within the constant flow of life’ (Algeria, 2020) I believe that all the images for this collection of photobooks imitate the ‘constant flow of life’ and death within the archive. Due to my indecision, I curated a harmonious collection of works that enhance one another from: *Temporal Reverie: The Unveiling of Alina de Mowbrey* (2024), *Indexical Archives* (2025), *Dischronia* (2025), *Fixed and Unfixed* (2025) - The photobooks are an ode to both the exhibitions, nevertheless, act independently as narrators of the archive. During this process, I have adapted to working under the pressures of time and decision, enhanced my ability to correspond with the artists and thinkers to our disposal at the university, took part in critical analysis of a multitude of texts and photobooks, constructed meaningful narratives within the materiality and function of my own work and seamlessly conceptualised all aspects of my curation. I would consider these to be some of the key transferrable skills that will aid me in the industry to become a successful and employable asset.

Illustration List-

- 1) Hurth, D., 2021. *Stutters*. New York: Printed Matter, Inc.

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