

ArchiveKSA

Creating a Digital Archive for Kingston School of Art

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Abstract

Traditional archives of historic artefacts were not systematically acquired by Kingston School of Art during its formative years. To address the significant discrepancy between the historic practice of the art school and its material representation within holdings, ArchiveKSA emerged as a digital archiving platform. As researcher on ArchiveKSA, I am at the nexus of several alumni, student and staff communities. Collecting for ArchiveKSA involves nurturing these nascent online communities to connect personal narratives and virtual artefacts in webs of social relations. Using ArchiveKSA as a case study, this paper examines theories of online community-fostered archives and compares their functioning to traditional archives. The positioning of digital archives within memory frameworks, and the possibilities of multivocality in online and physical display are areas considered, with the similarities and differences between the digital and physical versions of the archive thrown into relief.

Keywords: Archive, Digital, Art, Design, Education, Memory, Object, Artefact, Community, Multivocality

Who and what is the archive for? What defines an archive? How can we theorise archival locations? These questions, amongst others, influenced our thinking when initiating the digital archiving project this article is focused upon. At the Centre for Visual and Material Culture, Kingston University, we are developing artefacts and resources that capture the varied histories of creative disciplines at Kingston School of Art, from its formation in the 19th century up to the present day. My aim here is to introduce the scope and aims of our archiving project from a theoretical perspective, and in doing so attempt to address some of these fundamental questions that underpin the notion of the archive in the digital era.

In recent years, the usage of archive as not just a physical site but as a theoretical construct has proliferated. Much as 'to curate' and 'curating' have spread far beyond the museum walls into academic writing, and finally permeating everyday cultural usage, a similar journey is being undertaken by 'the archive', 'to archive' and 'archiving'. Sue Breakell, archivist at University of Brighton, and formerly for Tate, has commented on this prominence, noting that:

Archives, it seems, are everywhere, both in popular culture and academic discourse. The BBC's Radio 4 has taken to using the word 'archive' as a noun, without a definite or indefinite article, as in, 'the programme will feature archive to tell the story of ...'. Even the computer game character Sonic the Hedgehog has four volumes of 'archives' available for purchase, inviting fans to 'travel back in time to where it all began'. At the other end of the scale, the change in name of the UK's Public Record Office to the National Archive suggests that the archives are not so much an instrument of state as a collective memory bank. (Breakell, 2008)

Breakell's observation that the archive is increasingly used to indicate collective memorial frameworks is one that is arguably predicated on the shifts that digitisation has enacted upon archival processes. Archives have become more fluid in this information age, less about artefacts (though these, inevitably still play their part) and more concerned with developing audience relationships within a matrix of social interactions. In this, the contemporary digital archive adheres to Bruno Latour's definition of 'the social' as a provisional movement of new associations rather than any specific place or artefact. He comments, 'The adjective 'social' designates two entirely different phenomena: it's at once a *substance*, a kind of stuff, and also a *movement* between non-social elements.'

(Latour, 2007: 159) The role of any archive - digital or otherwise - can primarily be located in the audiences it develops and speaks to. As Geoff Cox states in 'Notes on Archives', 'An archive stands not as a set of things or even a set of statements, but rather a set of relations' (Quoted in Breakell, 2010: 97). Artefacts are markers for the social relationships they underpin, symbolise and encapsulate. A key aim within our archiving project about Kingston School of Art was to initiate dialogue around the art school within and between different interested parties: from disciplinary specific discussion, through staff-student liaison – past and present – to intergenerational conversations between students and alumni. We aimed to construct a living archive, one that could have pedagogic benefits for current students across a range of disciplines by offering creative inspiration, examples of practice, and social/cultural context from previous eras and foster social relationships across groups connected to the art school. This display case of art school objects (Fig. 1) exhibited in November

2013 at the Knights Park Campus of Kingston University is a good example of a multifaceted approach to archival objects. Ann Ryves lent her palette and other artists' tools to the exhibition from materials she used as an art student at Kingston in the 1940s. The physical artefacts remain in the artists' personal collection, however the flexibility of the online digital archive (Fig. 2) allowed us to represent them as a trace of an artistic practice in website entries, as a marker of the exhibition itself (Fig. 3), and utilised in this setting within the art school itself to foster intergenerational comment, since contemporary art students at the site engaged with and compared their own practice to that represented by Ann's loaned items.



Figure 1. 1940s Palette, brushes, canvas stretcher and plumb line lent by Kingston artist Ann Ryves. Photo: [www.archiveksa.org/Ezzidin Alwan](http://www.archiveksa.org/Ezzidin%20Alwan).

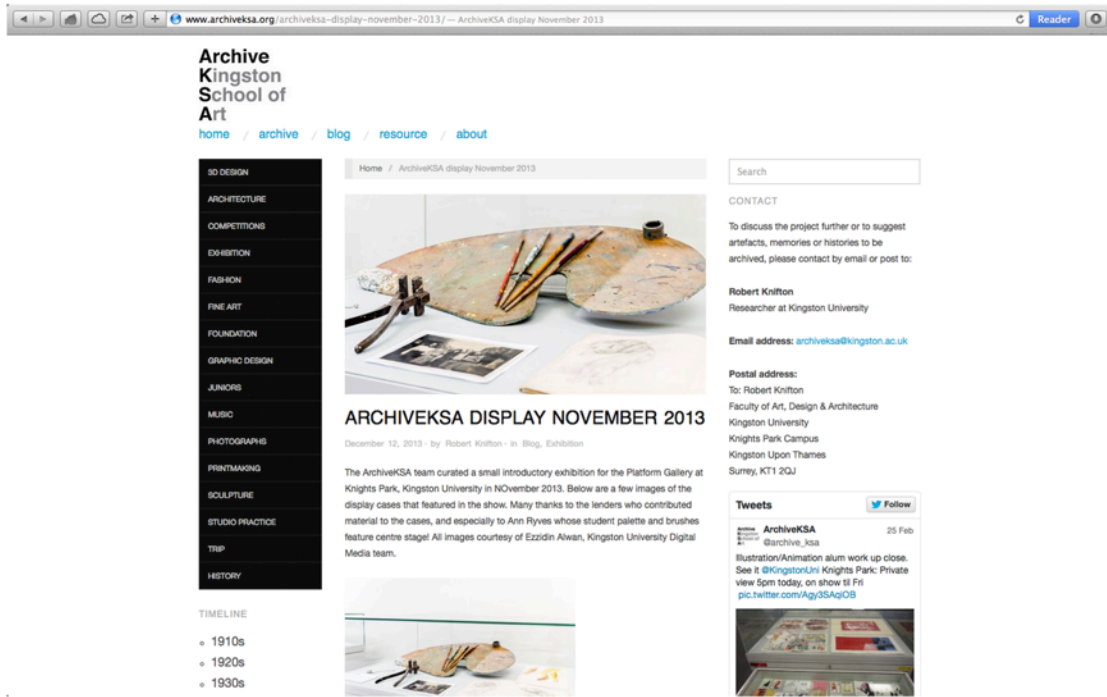


Figure 2. ArchiveKSA website entry for Ryves exhibition material. Photo: www.archiveksa.org/Rob Knifton.



Figure 3. November 2013 ArchiveKSA exhibition at Knights Park campus featuring Ryves loans. Photo: www.archiveksa.org/Ezzidin Alwan.

Angela M. La Porte, working with communities in Harlem, New York, has observed the pedagogic benefits that accrue from initiating this form of intergenerational dialogue. She maintains, 'Life experiences and ways of thinking and valuing may differ in many ways between generations, but when shared, can foster insights into the historical and cultural contexts of art and artifacts that enrich the study of art' (La Porte, 2000: 40). ArchiveKSA, as a living archive has the opportunity to offer a forum for intergenerational conversations between alumni of the art school and current/prospective students. By primarily developing online, the archive can evolve into a site of dialogic imagination (Bahktin, 1981). It therefore should not be regarded as a static, fixed entity but rather a contested, open, and shifting space where debates over the memorial processes affecting our collective vision of the past can be located. It is through such a mechanism that the digital archive permits multivalent approaches to artefacts to emerge, as I have previously discussed elsewhere in relation to online archives of popular music history (Knifton, 2013).

A further issue found with our work on Kingston School of Art was that little in the way of formal archival artefacts had survived from the different eras of the art school. There were minimal holdings accrued from minute books and press cuttings, plus the idiosyncratic holdings kept in specific departments – including press books and studio photography in the Fashion department (Fig. 4); student and staff work across a variety of techniques such as etching, lithography, woodcuts and screen printing in the plan chests of the printmaking department (Fig. 5); and a library of architectural slides featuring site visits and exhibitions (Fig. 6). The majority of the story we wish to tell, however, is not held in formal

physical archives but rather exists in the personal collections of individuals and in the memories and experiences of our overlapping audiences of alumni, students, and staff. Thus, instead of making accessible existing physical archives through processes of digitisation our task became reconstructing a narrative of the art school from digital simulacra of objects scattered around the world, and from the personal affective memories of former students and staff, drawing on the collective memory frameworks that exist amongst the communities connected to the art school and the university. Here, once again the format of the online digital archive has proved most effective. Objects that would be impossible (or at least highly problematic) to physically collect, such as a store of sketchbooks belonging to Judith Forrest, a former student at Kingston School of Art who emigrated to Australia (Fig. 7) are accessible and collectable in the guise of digital simulacra. Further, since artefacts such as these sketchbooks are submitted by personal users, they have accrued connections and meanings by personal association that further deepen the memorial links present in archival matter.

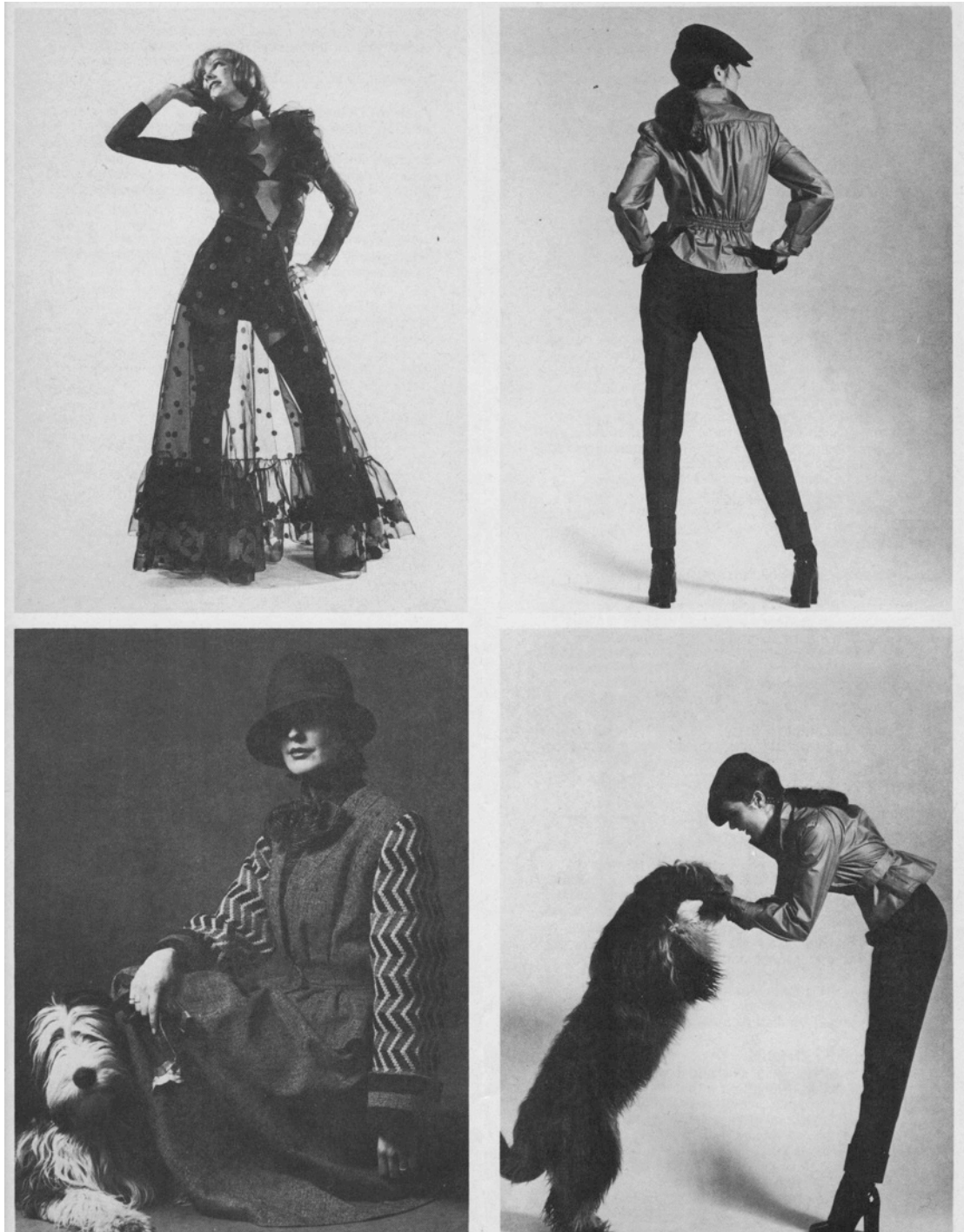


Figure 4. Studio fashion photography from early 1970s – featured in course leaflets for 1973/1974 entry. Photo: www.archiveksa.org/Chris Thomas.

PRINTMAKING 1990



F A C U L T Y

of

D E S I G N

KINGSTON POLYTECHNIC
KNIGHTS PARK

WEDNESDAY 27th JUNE

-

THURSDAY 5th JULY

9.30am - 8.30pm

KINGSTON
POLYTECHNIC

Design & type: Anders Christensen

Figure 5. Printmaking 1990 poster from art school archives. Design by Anders Christensen. Photo: www.archiveksa.org/Rob Knifton.



Figure 6. Kingston Architecture students survey Diss, 1964. Photo: www.archiveksa.org/Dennis Berry Slide Collection.



Figure 7. Judith Forrest's sketchbooks from studying Fine Art at Kingston Polytechnic, 1972–1975. Photo: www.archiveksa.org/Judith Forrester.

Envisaging the digital archive as a repository for personal affective memory is a useful delineation, although not necessarily a radical repositioning. In some respects, all archives are assembled from personal affective memory since they bear the imprint of the choices made by their archivists. As Sue Breakell notes,

[...] the archive which we keep and maintain in its current arrangement is only one of the infinite permutations of and perspectives on that material. The roles of researcher, archivist and creator are now far less distinct, and the boundaries between them more blurred.

(Breakell, 2010: 102)

This condition of contingency is the tension at the heart of archive practice, described by art theorist Hal Foster as ‘found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private’ (Foster, 2006: 145). The second part of Breakell’s hypothesis is also an issue highly pertinent to online archival practices: where exactly should we draw the line between researcher, archivist and creator? The archive we aim to construct for ArchiveKSA can benefit from such blurred definitions, since it is this fluidity that permits the interplay of memory to function. By allowing multiple authors, creators, researchers and archivists, the contemporary online archive is not a fixed concrete site or a definitive account of the institution from official documents. Instead, it is highly possible and desirable to create an archive assembled out of memory, one that for ArchiveKSA will offer a dynamic view of the art school as a living organism embedded within a web of intermeshing communities of creative professions, interest groups, and student agglomerations, and offer creative routes through personal experience

that can build new social frameworks for memory processes. Thus, the digital archive in contradistinction to the traditionally conceived physical archive should seek to develop conditions of multivocality, with voices from a range of perspectives given space to present their experiences.

Within ArchiveKSA we have accounts written by students from the 1950s (see, for instance, Shanahan, n.d.), research conducted by current students, and objects presented by alumni and staff from the 1940s to the 1980s. The conditions of truthhood found in such mnemonic perspectives is more malleable than formal history. Oral history accounts embellish and narrate incidents beyond the formal archival entry, accessing the space between memory and history that Pierre Nora so fruitfully mined (Nora, 1989). In conducting oral history interviews for ArchiveKSA, I encountered several times a story of medical specimens being stored at the art school during World War II. In different respondents' accounts, the interaction of students with these preserved corporeal fragments varied, with one interviewee recalling art students sketching still lifes featuring the jars, and another discussing their prominent positioning by medical students in the school canteen. The formal archival entry within the Ministry for Education holdings at the National Archives merely recounts the requisitioning of several rooms for teaching medical students at Kingston evacuated from St. Thomas' Hospital. Through the ArchiveKSA website we can promulgate the full range of archival information and personal recollections, allowing the archive user to decide upon their relative veracity for themselves. Therefore, by representing multiple remembrances, the digital setting of the research has permitted a diffusion of the authoritative archival

voice creating potential to allow alternate journeys into archival material to emerge, rather than reinforcing what Laurajane Smith terms the 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006).

The challenges of archiving narratives accrued from individuals differs greatly from those faced when considering formal institutions. As noted above, the memories of individuals are ordered in personal, affective patterns that are fluid and focus on emotional detail that formal records cannot hope to include. For instance, in collecting oral histories from artists who attended Kingston School of Art as students in the 1940s and 1950s we asked respondents for their memories of their first days at the art school. Some factual errors, such as a misremembering of dates creeps into such accounts – details that the registration cards found in the basement archives of the university portrays with accuracy. Yet, the wealth of personal experience they include far outweighs these drawbacks – as in the instance of one student who recalled jumping on and riding down a bannister in his euphoria of beginning at the art school, only to find himself face to face with the reproachful Principal at the foot of the staircase. The approach to history and memory within the digital archive can hope to make best use of both personal account and formal record, institutional and individual archives harnessed in unison.

In time, we also aim to develop an online platform that will address some of the issues of the digital object and its preservation. Increasingly, the records and outputs of art students and staff are 'born digital', existing only in online spaces. Take, for instance, architectural drawings which are now created on specialist

software, or animation films that exist only in digital formats on sites such as Vimeo and YouTube. The UNESCO charter on the preservation of digital heritage recognises the danger that such artefacts may be lost if suitable archiving processes are not put in place:

Attitudinal change has fallen behind technological change. Digital evolution has been too rapid and costly for governments and institutions to develop timely and informed preservation strategies. The threat to the economic, social, intellectual and cultural potential of the heritage – the building blocks of the future – has not been fully grasped.

(UNESCO, [2003] 2009)

Although they share a name, each site maintains the core concept of preservation, and they continue to interact with each other in meaningful ways, the digital archive nonetheless differs fundamentally from the physical archive. This should be considered as an opportunity: the digital archive should not be conscribed by the conventions of its physical counterpart, but rather freed to explore the possibilities its online setting enable. As David Weinberger has noted, virtual space breaks in particular from more traditional physical archives by permitting new processes of ordering to develop – thus transforming how we gather and organise information such as that found within archival materials. He states,

the digital world thereby allows us to transcend the most fundamental rule of ordering the real world. Instead of everything having its place, it's better if things can get assigned multiple places simultaneously.

(Weinberger, 2007: 14)

William Turkel echoes Weinberger, characterising the Internet itself as ‘an archive that is instantly accessible, machine-readable, growing exponentially and constantly being reordered’ (Turkel et al., 2013: 62–3). By offering new and interesting ways to classify and organise material, the digital archive opens up possibilities for the multivocality for objects that were not immediately apparent in traditional materially rigid physical archives. A nodal rather than linear approach to pathways through information means that single objects can be mobilised variously and contiguously via blog posts, online exhibitions, and archive listings. Sue McKemmish observes that:

in a digital world we can place records simultaneously in multiple or parallel contexts and thus enable them to perform multiple roles – the song as performance and oral record; the diary as record and publication; a building as part of a historic site and part of an archive; government records as part of personal, community, and public archives; a cave painting as art and archive.

(McKemmish, 2011: 127)

The digital archival object is never fixed in one identity, but rather has the potential to be multivalent and shifting in meaning dependent on user and context. It also has the potential through this fluidity of meaning and appeal to crowd sourcing to construct a more coherent community where previously only a looser grouping in existence. The digital aspects of the ArchiveKSA project certainly encouraged a broad diaspora of art school alumni spread around the world to engage with the material online, contribute their own experiences, and provide more digital archival material. As Rhiannon Mason and Zelda Baveystock

have explored (Baveystock and Mason, 2009), the very act of crowd sourcing material online leads to the formation of identities and groupings, especially since the multivocality of online objects permits discussion to arise around the significance and symbolism of specific artefacts. Whilst Mason and Baveystock's example website achieved this through debating what constitutes an icon of Englishness, the same can be said for the artefacts of the art school.

There is perhaps though a word of caution to be raised here. The ontological status of the physical object should not be entirely divorced from its informational data since there are intrinsic qualities and experiences only accessible via the materiality of an experiential encounter with an artefact itself, as Susan Yee acknowledges in her account of working within the archives at La Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris in the mid-1990s. Discussing the archive's shift toward digital practices at this time, Yee laments the loss of the research relationship the material artefact fostered:

Looking at the scans in the computer room made me miss the quiet of the physical archive, the ritual of bringing out the precious original drawings, the long minutes of unwinding.

(Yee, 2007: 34)

Yee contends that the emotional aspect of an encounter with an evocative object risks being erased through digitisation processes, through this loss of ritual and a diminishing of personal connection caused by mediation, of experiencing the object at a remove. Whilst the practices we are developing at Kingston to engage with material relating to the past of the art school are primarily focused online, we do also recognise the power of affect to be found in material culture; and

some of our collecting and exhibiting techniques address this by working with physical objects, replicating the rituals of the archive, and also by encouraging material responses to archival material from current art school students. There are aspects of an artwork that can never be sufficiently conveyed by digital archival representation; for instance, the kinaesthetic, haptic relationship we enter into in a physical encounter with sculptural work is one lost to us when viewing it purely through an online digital archive. But, perhaps we may still access an approximation of such data from a vicarious sampling of such experiential elements, as may be witnessed in tutors Andy Tittensor and John Robson's reaction to a student installation in the following image from the 1970s (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Andy Tittensor (front) and John Robson climb through a student sculptural installation in the studios at Canbury Park Road, Kingston 1970s. Photo: [www.archiveksa.org/Rose Konstam](http://www.archiveksa.org/RoseKonstam).

Increasingly, however, current art students at Kingston appear to be relatively unconcerned by the loss of material affect inherent in the born digital artefact. Rather than regarding it as a source of anxiety or Proustian lament, many of our students see such differentiation as a creative area for exploration, constructing their practice around the divide between digital and physical data. For instance, the beautiful, colourful prints recent graphic design graduate Melita Gandham makes utilising information gathered from the dating app Tinder (Fig. 9) demonstrate the playful attitude that many young practitioners across a range of creative disciplines bring to questions of physical presence and digital information. Gandham's works visualise the process of 'swiping' to either like or decline a profile within the app, and thus take data that existed only in the digital realm and repurpose it for a non-digital environment.



Figure 9. Melita Gandham, *You got to kiss a lot of frogs to get to your prints*, 2014.
Photo: [www.meli.club/Melita Gandham](http://www.meli.club/Melita%20Gandham).

Similarly, the fascinating work of photography graduate Emily Rose Waite plays on our perception of digital and physical readings, in this case via representation of landscape. Waite's series *How to explore the world without getting tired* is composed entirely of carefully curated selections from Google Streetview (Fig. 10). Waite explains her working process on her website:

I scour each continent, composing and saving scenes which I then re-photograph, capturing the screen lines in the process. I then place a caption below each image, stating the co-ordinates of each location and the distance it is away from my bedroom. (Waite, n.d.)

For Waite, the instantaneity of access to images such as those on Google Streetview elicits a heterotopic response: the image repertoire effect generated by the digital archive means we can simultaneously be in multiple locations. Yet of course, as the artist acknowledges, there is a huge difference between seeing and being – Waite's work thus speaks eloquently to the blurring of ontological lines caused by digital archiving technologies, yet unlike Yee in the Corbusier archive she does not lament the absence of the physical; instead Waite seems to regard the digital and physical as equivalent, with the digital representation of place considered a sufficient and even in some circumstances a superior experience to being there. As she confirms in her website statement, 'I do not have a list of places I would like to visit; I just have a strong desire to see' (Waite, n.d.).

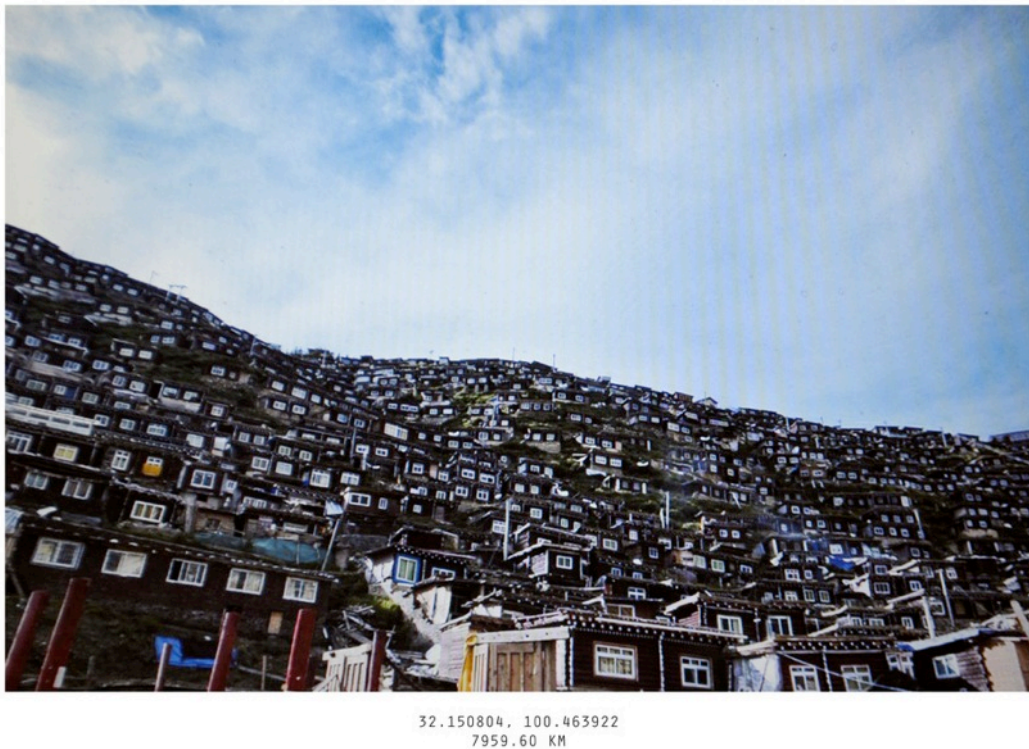


Figure 10. Emily Rose Waite, *How to explore the world without getting tired*, 2014. Photo: [www.emilyrosewaite.com/Emily Rose Waite](http://www.emilyrosewaite.com/Emily%20Rose%20Waite).

Gandham and Waite's work both featured in the 2014 Kingston Degree Show, and are just two examples amongst many of artistic responses to the born digital environment found within contemporary art schools. Such student experimentation and ease around digital archival information is exciting when considering the future of the ArchiveKSA project. The potential for students to connect with these histories and memories, and to repurpose, remix, and mash up their contents into their practice is immense.

The digital archive also possesses usefully ingrained approaches to remembering and forgetting. A website such as ArchiveKSA may include all of the information

gathered from the archival objects, yet it's structure or site architecture will layer information in a sedimentary fashion, with the most recently discovered artefacts naturally sifting to the top, whilst older material is searchable but not readily apparent on the homepage, where the newer stories naturally draw the eye (Fig. 11). There has been a shift too in the definitions of what constitutes an online archive. Recent discourse on the topic moves from discussing, for example, how to archive blogs to instead thinking about the act of blogging itself as a form of archiving. McKemmish sums up this epistemic shift well, remarking that it represents a shift:

from how to use digital technologies to make archival collections more accessible to how to use digital technologies to enable the co-creation of records and the co-formation of the archives in spacetime, and assure the preservation and accessibility of these networked, shared archival space through time.

(McKemmish, 2011: 133)

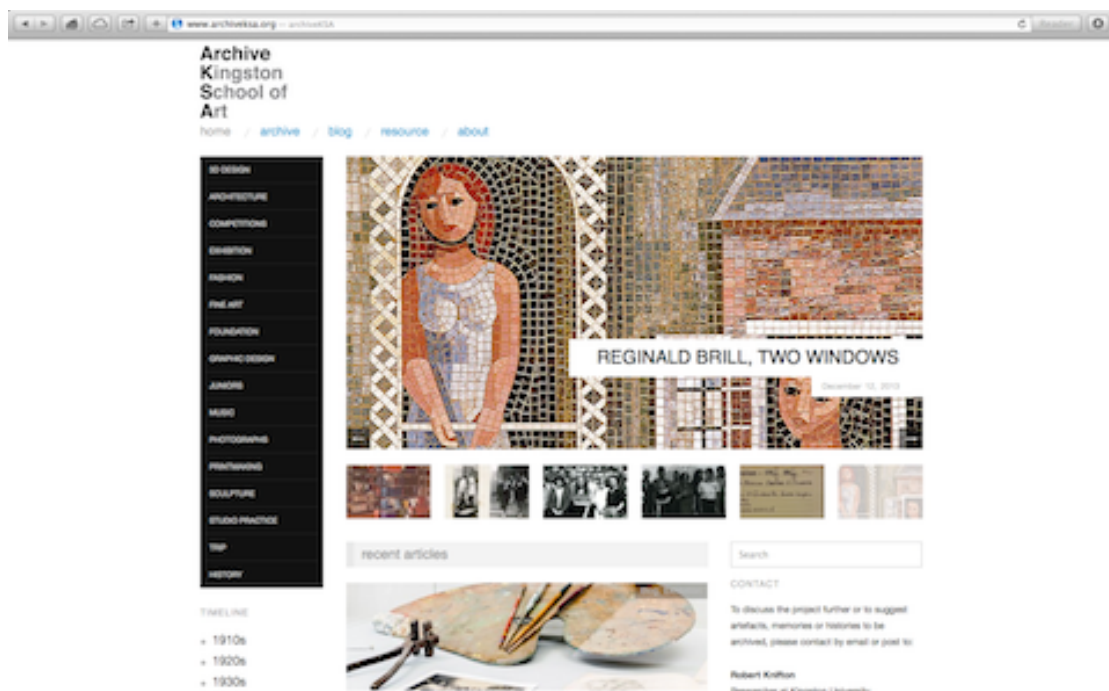


Figure 11. Archiveksa home page. Photo: www.archiveksa.org/Rob Knifton.

Such considerations of the shift in digital archives are significant to a project such as ArchiveKSA. In adopting this approach to memory and forgetting within digital archiving we have been influenced by James Leo Cahill's essay from the collection 'Everyday Ebay'. Cahill distinguishes the auctioning website as an 'ephemeral, porous archive' or 'malfunctioning mnemonic machine' (Cahill, 2006: 185) that temporarily collects and shares knowledge, yet equally embodies an act of creative destruction through continual forgetting. Following Derrida, the structural breakdown of memory is the archive's condition of possibility (Derrida, 1996: 11): a combination of remembering and forgetting is, from Derrida's perspective, a necessary structural condition of any memory project. Mapping processes of amnesia and anamnesis onto digital formats enables the digital archive to react to memory in ways that might not be possible for the physical archive site. In his article, Cahill discusses how Ebay's users form a digital community that is constantly shifting through the repertoire of images they temporarily upload to the site. This shifting quality of memory enactment online is a significant feature of the digital archive in contradistinction to the traditional physical archive. The fluidity of online space permits artefacts residing here to negotiate several memorial processes simultaneously, giving meaning to different groups and structuring memory within and across these groups in unexpected ways. As Cahill notes, 'A temporary re-collection of images, a site of transient storage, accumulation, circulation, and investment, repertoire also implies performativity, invoking a capacity for repetition in a manner that does not preclude variation' (Cahill, 2006: 194). The online digital archive

circulates digital objects through a number of possible meanings, with the artefact being acting out different meanings for different users. Performativity and variation of meaning are qualities that the digital archive can imbue in artefacts that might otherwise be viewed as more static, and these characteristics were ones we wanted to capture in the artefacts we present for the art school history/memory project.

The process that Cahill outlines under work with a site like Ebay is essentially one of collective cultural anamnesis, where we view the site as an expression of the social frameworks Maurice Halbwachs indicated were necessary for the construction of collective memory. The website thus offers the foundations to which the sifted accumulation of memory and memorial artefact can adhere. It was important to us that in ArchiveKSA accounts recorded from past alumni and staff members would be relatable to present and future generations of art students. We wanted to assemble an archive and a story within it that was, in Lisa Blenkinsop's phrase 'in a constant state of co-creation' (Blenkinsop, 2009: 122). Blenkinsop argues that a virtual community – one structured around digital archival memory – can potentially permit a range of relationships to grow that would not develop in real life. This was the aim of ArchiveKSA, especially by encouraging intergenerational dialogue between different eras of art school students. From the outset therefore we involved current students with the ArchiveKSA project so that the stories of the art school's past we uncover interact with current and future practice.

Students from the current art school have been involved in interviewing alumni in their respective disciplines. We wanted to build up a basis of dialogue around the development of methods and techniques specific to each subject, so that comparisons of alterations in art and design education over periods of time can be delineated. Parallels between past and present art pedagogies that emerged through such conversations we hope will eventually result in students rethinking, or at least considering actively, their own creative methodologies. The interviews we have planned will act not just as a new archive of artistic technique connected to the art school, but to enhance the connections between current and former students. If successful, the interviews will be rolled out further, developed into a series of public lectures involving exactly such intergenerational technique-focused discussion at the art school site, asking how the methods of the past and present might affect the future of the art school.

We are currently developing such alumni/student interaction with one of our most high-profile alumni, Professor Helen Storey of London College of Fashion, who studied Foundation and Fashion at Kingston. Storey's account of her time at Kingston in her memoir *Fighting Fashion* highlights the materiality of memory, how it adheres to the sensory and kinaesthetic qualities of artefacts:

My love of fabric began when Lycra and I first met in a darkened stockroom. It was cold, slippery and heavy; metres of stuff which went wherever I wanted it to go. From childhood I have associated 'touch' with darkness: twisted tight in heavy curtains for hide-and-seek, rigid cold in cotton sheets tucked under me when ill. The first time I found my

mother's wedding dress was in a large, darkened cupboard in the hall; my hands in first, I felt the cut of it, the lace and the net before I ever saw it.

(Storey, 1996: 32)

We are working alongside the Helen Storey Foundation to develop student interaction with her own archive of work, develop digital resources that highlight potential paths for creative education and careers. These resources will be based around artefacts, and thus the material qualities of the sort Storey relates in her account above will play their part, as triggers for memory, acting in a similar way to the 'punctum' that Barthes identifies as being key to our empathetic response to a photograph. (Barthes, 1993: 27) Like art, literature or photography, the object within an archive holds emotional layers that construct commonality through shared experience. By developing digital archives and artefacts with this basis, we can present histories of the art school that contemporary practitioners can empathise with. In working with Helen Storey Foundation, the digital archive we assemble for ArchiveKSA will further act as a portal, linking to other related digital resources elsewhere on the internet, connecting a community of interests who assemble via their experiences attending Kingston School of Art.

The digital archive as online portal serving a community of interest has scope to be applied pedagogically in ways that enhance learning strategies in the current art school. Consider, for instance the possible impact of technical analysis of the methods applied by painter and former Kingston student John Bratby, accompanied by archival documents from his period as an art student on contemporary student painters working in the same studio spaces he inhabited.

Such pedagogic connections need time to develop fully; our website currently relies upon a simple blog structure, but this does enable us to expand and include further technological documentation such as podcasting, live-tweeting, and hosting video clips from interviews and events, permitting the material collected to be viewed by a wider community than would otherwise be possible; the potential here is for the basis of the art school and the communities it engages with to be broadened in scope through technological means – we can see this aspect of digital pedagogy already influencing the development of the university sector via mass online lectures, for example. Jon Baggaley writes about massive open online courses (MOOCs), highlighting their potential to transform higher education – for good or bad: ‘In years to come, the MOOC may be hailed as an educational redeemer, or as an ugly symptom of the general education slide’ (Baggaley, 2013: 374). For Forsey et al, MOOCs are ‘flipping’ the classroom: inverting traditional pedagogical models so that course materials are engaged with online, and physical classes become workshops or symposia. Forsey insists that ‘Online technologies allow us to shift our pedagogies into more creative and effective spaces’ (Forsey, 2013: 482). The digital archive is an ideal vessel through which to deliver such course materials in an inverted online-centred pedagogical model. Our aim with ArchiveKSA is to develop the histories surrounding the art school’s past into open educational resources that will inform student learning in the present and future. Colleagues at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) have pioneered a course that draws on similar ground. RISD’s Art School Histories course is run jointly across the institution’s museum and art school sites, and as well as offering historical and theoretical perspectives on art education, aims to encourage students from both practical

art and design subjects and discourse-focused disciplines who take the course to 'develop the capacity to reflect on and to analyze their own education' (Ganz Blythe, 2012: 1). Adding digital archival holdings to the learning resources available would add another dimension to the formation of art school pedagogy and its negotiation of the theory/practice divide.

Digital collecting is a further part of the ArchiveKSA model, and once again has involved students in its composition thus far. In 'Telling Objects', Mieke Bal discusses how we might view collecting as a narrative in itself, highlighting how doing so leads us to question the troubling chronology of collecting: how exactly do we define its beginning, middle and end? Bal further identifies issues around the question of motivation as the 'motor' of narrative, and the definition of 'otherness' and fetishisation implied by the collecting impulse (Bal, 2006: 273). We wanted within our project to openly encourage students to consider such issues around the narrative of collecting, and to take an active role within their construction. In 2013, we launched the Kingston University Art Survey, which involved students conducting a campus-wide survey of the artworks on display at the university, documenting each with photographs and other metadata, before compiling this information into a database. The student's research into artworks was added to the digital archive assembled around the art school, and precisely brought up questions of narrative form as seen in Bal. When observing a painting made by a student from Kingston School of Art, what point do we take as the beginning of the narrative attached to the object: its creation by the student, or earlier, in their admission to the school? What could we say about the object biography of the work how it came to be owned by the university, and

what does this tell us about the collecting impulses of the institution? By providing such details about the collection, the students were also helping us to preserve it by contributing information that helped assemble the case for funds for conservation and storage to the university central administration. Using data gathered by students, this application was approved in late 2013. The research undertaken by students attached to the art survey has also allowed us to prepare works for potential future exhibition – either by the project team ourselves, or indeed by external partners. Thus, we can see how archival work in the digital realm can result in significant cumulative improvements for the status of the extant physical objects. The digital is not entirely divorced from the physical; rather the two exist in a dialectical relationship. The dialogue maintained between digital and physical artefacts is crucial for our understanding of digital archiving practices.

The students involved with the Kingston University Art Survey project wrote biographical entries for use online. We took inspiration from the hugely successful digitisation project by the PCF, 'Your Paintings', which has demonstrated the value of online information about art collections. Fiona Cameron has written on the need to challenge the illusion that the digital is somehow outside of existing cycles of heritage, arguing that 'the roles and uses of the digital object must be understood as part of the broader heritage complex' (Cameron, 2006: 50). A key issue for ArchiveKSA is to attempt to span the gap between virtual and physical archival worlds. The research presented within the art survey enabled this, and will provide the basis for open educational resources linking the art collections of the university to the histories and

narratives uncovered by the project. We plan in the future to include RFID stickers alongside each work on display in public space around the university so that this information can be even more easily accessed, and offer visitors, students and staff a greater understanding of the creative legacy of the art school in terms of its material culture. Further, many of the artefacts documented are the work of former students of the art school, so by recovering information on these pieces we are reinserting them into the narrative of the school, deepening the understanding of the art school's history for a number of audiences. The next step in this particular project will be to use the historical basis of the collection as a starting point to improve contemporary collecting policies within the faculty, and a long term aim is to enable work from degree shows to be not only collected in a more systematic manner, but documented, researched, displayed, and placed within an historically inclusive narrative. Issues around contemporary collecting are thrown into relief by the move toward digital archives. As Martin Hand has noted, 'memory traces and practices are becoming more immediate and disposable in everyday life, regardless of what occurs in the archive' (Hand, 2008: 136) and this leads to a tension between digital culture of instant accessibility (and, by extension, disposability) and traditional archival practices such as acquisition, storage and preservation.

Through increasingly working with digital and digitised objects we have abstracted physicality from meaning: the 19th century notion of an object communicating inherently through its presence is less widely held in this digital age. Fiona Cameron highlights that 'objects and their meanings are now seen as contingent, fluid, and polysemic' (Cameron, 2006: 54) and that 'the concept of

real, original authenticity becomes a social construct' (ibid). Through working with digital and physical archives connected to the art school via ArchiveKSA it has become increasingly clear that the digital objects we research and present will ultimately gain their meaning only via the communities who use and interpret them.

Developing ArchiveKSA as a digital and physical archiving platform in the future we will continue to record and place on record the wealth of creative practices found at the school during its past decades. As discussed throughout this article, we will aim to achieve this both in the digital and physical worlds, using our website as an information portal to initiate dialogue across and within social groups. We are also developing publications, an exhibition and art projects for 2014 and 2015 that will offer fresh viewpoints on the history of Kingston School of Art and encourage student participation in this making of history, drawing on different perspectives to maintain a multivocal approach to the archive. For example, in February 2014 Brian Love, former course director for Illustration and Animation guest curated an exhibition drawing on ArchiveKSA as well as his own personal artefacts (Fig. 12). Future exhibitions will be guest curated by alumni and by current students, developing a range of voices in dialogue around the art school. Members of staff who provide material for and engage with the archive via teaching are invaluable to sustaining the project, and also gain themselves in terms of a learning resource relevant to their area of research, promotion of their courses and their rich histories, and opportunities to elucidate the past works of their colleagues and former students, and in doing so

articulate the direction in which their teaching and practice is heading in the future.



Figure 12. A Love for illustration exhibition installation – travel pamphlets illustrated by Kingston students. Photo: [www.archiveksa.org/Rob Knifton](http://www.archiveksa.org/Rob%20Knifton).

Improvement of the condition and extent of physical archival holdings also features within our planning, since as we have served to highlight the condition of physical artefacts available has a direct correlation with the quality of digital archives and resources we can offer. Further, we aim to harness the possibilities inherent in digital archives for art education pedagogy. In 2015 we plan to draw upon ArchiveKSA research in the design of a cross-disciplinary module open to practitioners and theorists in fine art, design disciplines, and art history – thus mobilising the digital archives of ArchiveKSA for discussions about the situation of the art school in the past, present and future. We plan to link our students with their American counterparts studying on the similar module at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) using digital means to expand the communities affected by and commenting on the digital artefacts gathered.

The particular strength of working with historical archive collections online is precisely that they're not static, but rather have an influence that can through their mobilisation enable future pedagogies to evolve. The elusive substance of the digital archive in motion is only recently becoming fully appreciated, as its order and format has an effect on the construction of meaning just as much as the content portrayed. Dubravka Ugrešić has commented on how the rapid evolution of technology is having an accelerated impact upon our memory processes, more so than any ideological shifts. She contends that the digital archive is affecting how we narrate the past of our memories (Ugresic, 2011). Digital archiving presents an opportunity for the transfer of personal affective memory into collective cultural anamnesis. An online memory nexus such as ArchiveKSA has the potential to affect the construction of personal memory in the future, linking social practice, pedagogy, history and artefact in a performative dialogue that can bring the story of an institution like Kingston School of Art to life.

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Biography

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Prior to joining Kingston, Robert was researcher for the AHRC Beyond Text project 'Collecting and Curating Popular Music Histories' at University of Liverpool. He has lectured in museum studies and art history at Manchester, MMU, Liverpool, and Liverpool Hope universities. For his doctoral studies he co-curated the Tate Liverpool exhibition *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde*.