

## Editorial

The word 'Archive' at the first instance, evokes images of documents, files, cabinets, or storage spaces that are repositories of personal, collective, and collected data. However, as scholarship on the word suggests, the word "archive" carries multiple definitions.

The impulse to archive may be a human response to the inevitability of death, which attempts to transcend the immediate and corporeal, and gives a semblance of permanence to the ephemeral lived experiences that otherwise exist mostly in liminal sites.

The archive is also a means to construct knowledge about the past, in the present, and for the future. Jacques Derrida traces the word "archive" to the Greek word "arkheion", a residence of superior magistrates, the archons, as well as the place of authority where official documents were filed. The archons were not only the custodians of these documents, but also bore the ability and had the power to interpret and further consign them.<sup>1</sup> The archive, thus, becomes a site of hegemony and power, where, and *from where*, knowledge was/is/could be constructed, construed, and disseminated to further the dominant discourse. This hegemonic presence shapes collective memory through multiple narratives of power, and by that virtue also orchestrates/fabricates/constructs/engineers the reconstruction of memory. The notion of selective memory and the act of forgetting selectively become intrinsically linked with the archive. The way history is shaped, the manner in which certain narratives are foregrounded, or even created, while others are forgotten, neglected or excluded, evinces the role collective amnesia plays in constructing sites of remembrance.

This instantaneous reading of the archive—where it is connected to power and hegemony—is transcended when the metanarrative is subverted to challenge the positionality of the original. These "counter-archives," as Okwui Enwezor puts it in his essay, not only create other voices in opposition to the dominant discourse, but also become the means to uphold alternative narratives.<sup>2</sup>

To make visible these counter narratives, artists, writers, and thinkers have interpreted, reinterpreted, and subverted the archive; refusing singular, didactic readings, embracing uneven, fractured terrains, and occupying different positions in the "expanded field" of the archive and its meaning.<sup>3</sup> This exercise of unpacking led us to address its multiple connotations in our first issue, aiming to defy its unitary meaning.

As a journal stemming from an art school, we have paid specific attention to visual production and engagement with the thematic. These multifarious forms of engagement are visible in the contributions: Adnan Madani's essay looks at anti archival tendencies, and argues that the archival impulse is also connected to the field of visibility; whereas Seher Naveed questions how the photograph as a technological tool for archiving has the capacity to produce false

memories. Heba Islam, in conversation with Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani, references Karachi LaJamia's research sessions of a mega development project in Karachi with the view to examine the displacement it has caused in the area. The exchange highlights the complexities of documenting and archiving as a pedagogical exercise. Madiha Aijaz journeys across Pakistan in a quest to document underused and abandoned railway stations. Her essay unfolds as a layered narrative, transporting the viewer to an unspecified time and place—both here, *not-here*. Drawing from his practice, Fazal Rizvi delves into personal narratives of memory and erasure, of loss and the intangible. This body of work manifests as an amalgamation of text and visuals, opening itself to multiple readings of the archive. The photographic archive also becomes the point of inquiry for Veera Rustomji's paintings. In a quest to revisit the Parsi community's history, she draws upon oral narratives that eventually complicate the very visuals that sit precariously between fact and fiction. Mariyam Nizam considers the ravaging of an archival craft through generations in the Kafir (Kalash) valleys, where objects have lost their cultural and traditional meanings, and are now a diluted form of the original.

The process of initiating this journal, through its span of over a year, has had the support and encouragement from a number of individuals at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Dr. Jawaid Haider initiated the concept and formulated its working committee that strategised its road map for the year. His confident support enabled us, as a team, to see the idea to its fruition. We would like to thank him and the Executive Director, Samina Khan, for their continued support to the Editorial Board. Steering the committee as its chair, my friend and colleague, Saira Sheikh, envisioned the shape the journal would take. Her meticulous attention to detail enabled us to approach it with the same level of integrity that was true to her spirit. Sadly, she is no longer with us after battling cancer for a year. *Hybird* was one of the many projects that she held close to her heart, and we miss her presence immensely at its culmination.

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#### Notes

1. Robert Vosloo, "Archiving Otherwise: Some Remarks on Memory and Historical Responsibility," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 31, no. 2 (October 2005): 379-399.
2. Okwui Enwezor, "Archive Fever: Photography between History and the Monument," in *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York: International Center of Photography, and Göttingen: Steidl, 2008). Catalogue of an exhibition held at the International Center of Photography, New York, 18 January-4 May 2008. Title essay, pp. 10-51. Accessed 18 August 2017. [https://sites.duke.edu/vms565s\\_01\\_f2014/files/2014/08/enwezor2008.pdf](https://sites.duke.edu/vms565s_01_f2014/files/2014/08/enwezor2008.pdf).
3. Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring, 1979): 30-44.