

Emory Artist Archive Workshop Notes - August 13, 2016

Goal: To introduce and discuss practical strategies for the long term management of your archive

I. 10:00 – 11:10 – Why is this Important?

Facilitator: Randy Gue.

Introduction: “I saw I had a history.” You have a history, your work has a history, your practice has a history. Documenting the creative process is important. How are artists’ archives being used? (Show-n-tell activity).

Discussion:

1) Do you archive? How do you document?

Workshop participants responded that they keep:

- Websites and writings about works
- Notebooks of notes and edits “along the way.”
- Scraps of paper piled up
- Collections of clippings, and notebooks to go back to
- Posts on instagram
- E-mails of pictures
- Digital work, archived in sections
- Detailed pictures
- Photographs of large paintings
- Phone images to do assessment

2) Are you interested in other people seeing your creative process?

Workshop participants responded:

- There’s a whole life here—I’ve spent my life engaged in this process, and now I understand that this is a worthy endeavor. This is all that will be around if someone wants to understand this. I make a painting to be seen and so that someone will respond to it.
- There is an element of nostalgia in this, likens archiving to flipping through a photo album. Puts his studies up on his wall, but has never thought about someone wanting to see them.
- Sometimes they actively hide elements of her studio. Can makes pieces to not be seen, just to “get over an idea.” Sometimes she works hard to make sure one don’t see those “bumps and humps” – If you keep it “they [the pieces] talk too much” “I think the archive can threaten the final work.”
- Favorite notebooks are the spiral notebooks with ideas, notes, coffee spills. Prefers these (and sees them as more valuable) than digital notebooks.

- Brings up example of Rembrandt's early painting—we can see how his style grew over time. “That’s really what we’re talking about. Those mistakes, those things you think are failures—they’re not.”
- One of the things that I find is that I’m still talking about the same things from 15 years ago, just in a different way or medium.

II. 11:10-12:30 – What is important?

Facilitators: Julie Newton, Carrie Hintz, Katie Rawson

1) Mapping exercise: Artists draw the spaces that they inhabit, starting with artwork and moving onto the other things they consider important. They’ll mark computers, file cabinets, etc.

How many locations did artists include? Fewest 1: Most 20

Locations are varied: Car, Person, Internet, Garden, Friends and Family, Places in other states, Studios, Computer, Attic/Basement, Garage, Commercial Storage, Galleries, House, Collectors

2) Artist inventory exercise: What do you have? What do you keep? What should I be keeping?

- Artists Responded:
 - Books
 - Phone
 - Computer/ Hard Drives/ Thumb Drives/ Internet Accounts (Pinterest, etc.)
 - Paper
 - Paintings
 - Textiles (Clothes/Pillows/Costumes)
 - Film
 - Floppy Disks
 - VHS Cassettes
 - Journals
 - Sculpture
 - Letters
 - Lights
 - Exhibition Announcements
 - Magazine/ Newspaper Articles/ Clippings
 - Sound
 - Instruments
 - Supplies/ Materials
 - Files (Business contracts)
 - Slides
 - Packaging (Crates/plastic)
 - Dust ☒
 - Random Crap
 - Tools
 - Research Material

- Lanyard
- Furniture
- Personal Art Collection
- Photographs
- Food/Coffee/Booze
- Awards
- Certificates
- Calendars/ Appointments
- Cleaning supplies/ Dehumidifier/ Trash cans
- Pests
- Plants
- Pets
- Fridge
- Microwave
- Photo Albums
- Presentation Folios/ Photographs of work and installations
- Memories
- Friends work
- Mojo (of a space)

1) How do I organize and keep track of what I have?

Presentation: Remember that you are your own user. When you think about documentation, step back and think, “What is it that I do?” I make art, I sell art, I get inspired, I track where that art goes. Focus your efforts on the most important things that you do.

So, for example, your artist files, things that you use to reate your work, business records. It is important to keep records to facilitate your process. Also, think about the way that you already keep things: some of these are files. And some things you can throw away.

2) Taxonomy: Part of moving towards documentation is having a taxonomy. We’ll be working with these four categories:

1. Reference materials: the stuff you use to get inspired
2. Process Records: materials that document the process of production. What kind of paint do you use? Layout for how work is installed.
3. Business Records: contracts, names of people you’re sold to. Money spent.
4. Artwork/ Studio materials: Expansive definition. Artwork itself and some of the information you want to keep (blurs into process records)

What pieces need to come with the work to enhance understandability?

3) Exercise:

Artists go back to their spaces and think about

1. **USE:** In these categories, what kinds of things do you want to find easily for your own archival use?
2. **LEGACY:** What kinds of things do you want to have for other people?
3. After you answer these two, when you leave here, what are some things that you need to tackle?

a. Use: In these categories, what kinds of things do you want to find easily for your own archival use?

- Business records
- Reference/ Research Materials
- Books, journals, supplies, textiles, clippings, files supplies
- Studio Materials

Questions to consider: Are journals research or process? Do you have a sense of things that you are using now, or things that you are done with?

b. Legacy: What does the future need to know? What's important to you?

Artists responded:

- Documenting correspondence. E-mails from famous people. But also rich correspondence.
- Thinking about how I flesh out this thing: Idea, process, and reflection.
- Ideas and unfinished art.
- What belongs to whom is important. Art is often left unsigned.

Do you actually think about what people will think?

Artists responded:

- Didn't used to, but is thinking about it more.
- Surprised what people are interested in. Paint brushes, and the drip catchers, as well as the art.
- Keeping legacy is important to not be misrepresented.
- It depends on the personality of artists. Some want to curate their image, others want to put it all out there.

Take-away: Document what you do. What people want to see is a reflection of you and your work. This differs greatly from person to person. To be most effective show who you are as an artists and a business person.

c. Triage/Priorities: What are your priorities around your materials now?

Artists responded:

- More hard copies, records of the people she works with, preserving stories and items posted to social media.
- Managing what is already done and what do move forward with. Stop making and sift through. Separate out creative or storage spaces.
- Spending time on business records. Better organize research records. How can she co-work with self, to come together in a more organized way?
- Cleaning and reorganizing.
- Making the work, process, writing, and documentation flow together as part of a whole.
- Storage! Storage! Storage!
- Documenting the whole process from beginning to end in a kind of scrapbook/portfolio.
- Digital backup.
- Maintaining physical space.
- Organizing time.

III. 1:30 – 2:30 – Lightning Talks: Moving from passive to active storage.

Strategies for Organization: Process and Business Records: Carrie Hintz

- Think about what you do.
- Think about what kind of records you create.
- Start with your thought process:
- Chronology
- Media
- Inspiration (Reference)
- Related to Making Art (Process)
- Business of Art (Files)

Think does this thing matter? You don't need to keep everything. Example: Don't need to keep receipts to record the price of paint. Your work, however, you probably want to keep.

- Long-term
- Process files
- Sales records
- Gallery correspondence
- Short-term
- Receipts
- Routine correspondence
- Business Files (categories)
- Tax records: file by year (short)
- Gallery and supplier correspondence (long)
- Supplier invoices and receipts (short)
- Artwork and Process Files
- Do you think chronologically or narratively.

Good, better, best practices for Digital Materials – Dorothy Waugh

Digital spaces can be just as big and just as unwieldy as physical spaces. Easy storage can be a blessing and a burden. What will the future want? You don't know what they'll want, so forget it. What's really important is how you use the stuff.

Technology changes so fast, and file formats change. It can be tricky to keep on top of these things. It's easy to lose files due to equipment failure, disasters. Plan for storage and backup.

To do this:

1) Know what you have. Make a list of where you have stuff stored. Once you've made your list: what types of materials matter to you. (E-mail, Social media, Blog). Do social media services allow you to download (ie. google takedown service). Where do you keep sensitive information?

2) Create well-managed content. Use commonly used formats. Use descriptive file names, when you're looking at your stuff you know what it is. What not to do: Don't put periods in your file names, or use general and poorly described labels.

How often should you things up? Best: Do it quarterly. But at least once a year.

Takeaways: Establish good habits. Backup your content. Have multiple copies in multiple digital locations (ie. computer, hard drive, cloud, studio, house, etc.) If you use external hard drives, don't rely on them outright, and be sure to use them frequently. You might consider an internal hard drive doc, as an alternative.

Keeping Track of Your Stuff – Chris Pollette

Tech tools for artists.

- Productivity tools for time management. Ex. Pomodoro technique.
- Database creation:
 - Airtable: names, images, bios, and any tags that you want to apply to it.
 - Field books. Can import excel or googledocs.
- For capturing materials: CamScanner and ScanBot. You can configure these to store on dropbox, box or google drive. Tools like googlephotos allow unlimited storage but not highest resolution
- Often you backup in crisis and then get worse at it. Backblaze and carbonite are automatic backups that store information in the cloud and on multiple servers for five dollars per month. There are options for mac (time machine) and pcs. Superduper will duplicate a hard drive.
- Data rot: if you store things on a format that will be obsolete, you have to be sure you can read it.
- Other services: Facebook itself offers an option for deleting files. You can also delete or preserve your social identity. Afterlife. Will delete files after you die.

Preservation – Julie Newton

What do you need to preserve against? Physical forces (earthquakes, dropping a piece of art), Thieves, Fire, Water, Pests, Pollutants (in environment, and in materials themselves), Light, Incorrect temperature/ humidity, neglect

First line of defense: building envelope. What are the environmental forces?

- Are you in a flood zone? What are risks?
- Look at walls. Do you see damage?
- Get things off the floor.
- Watch out for poor housekeeping. Bugs!

Best practices: Rose Library. Excellent environmental controls, boxes for individual materials, nice functioning Hvac, etc. But sometimes, low tech is enough. Ex. In metal work, you may just need a fan.

Emergency / Disaster planning – Ann Frellsen

Think about where you put your materials to avoid disaster.

But if disaster strikes remember safety should be your first priority. Then you can be creative: most damage is the result of water. Move wet materials carefully: If you only have cardboard, put plastic bags in them. If you need to absorb liquid use puppy pads, etc.

Types of Materials:

- Bound materials: Can be damp wiped.
- Documents: Can be rolled in window screening can be used to hold down materials and dry them.
- Photographs: Photos can be washed and air-dried. Air drying is the least destructive way of airing out materials.
- Media: Records—most records can be washed unless they're very old. Same with disks. Magnetic media, air dry.
- Textiles: If there was a shape to it, pad it out.
- Wood: Dry slowly (can put in plastic/ partially enclosed to slow down growing. Always raise wood up off of a concrete floor when drying.
- Electronic materials: Put them in rice. Trick it to get it 100% dry before you turn it on.
- Secondary problems: Glossy magazines, you try to separate and separate with wax paper. Rust damage...
- Mold: Will weaken, stain etc. paper fabric leather. And if it's moldy once, it's in danger later. Remind yourself if something had mold damage.
- Masks (N-95) with two straps.