

***'An Archival Impulse'*¹**

Essay written by Hel Foster.



Personal Memory Archives: Britney Saywell. Photo by Saywell 2023.

Hal Foster deliberates on the relevance and impact of archival practice within contemporary art. Foster probes idiosyncratic traits of the archive. Aware of the different characteristics that archive art practices have. Foster makes a point to discuss the alternate archival roles: archive as a form of way finder of one's existence. Pushing into historical information to retrieve a gesture of alternate knowledge or counter-memory.

“In the first instance archival artists seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. ... These sources are familiar, drawn from the archives of mass culture, to ensure a legibility that can then be disturbed or detourné; but they can also be obscure, retrieved in a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory. Such work will be my focus here (Foster 2004).”

¹ Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse' 2004.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240678354_An_Archival_Impulse

The discussion around the ways archive art practices engage with current events and our individual understandings of the world relates to the ideas I am exploring in my art practice. Within my installation processes, I am using an array of recording methods that act as an experienced archive. The recordings used are an archive in themselves but are also living outside of an archival lens. I am specifically interested in the opportunity to alternate art archives to allow a viewer to challenge their presumptions about history and current events. Questioning the comfort of the knowledge they carry.

Britney Saywell 2023.