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Into the Unknown: Navigating Spaces, Terra Incognita and the Art Archive

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Abstract

This paper is a navigation across time and space – travelling from 16th century colonial world maps which marked unknown territories as Terra Incognita, via 18th century cabinets of curiosities; to the unknown spaces of the Anthropocene Age, in which for the first time we humans are making a permanent geological record on the earth's ecosystems. This includes climate change.

The recurring theme is loss and becoming lost. I investigate what happens when someone who is lost attempts to navigate and find parallels between Terra Incognita and the art archive, and explore the points where mapping, archiving and collecting intersect. Once something is perceived to be at risk, the fear of loss and the impulse to preserve emerges. I investigate why in the Anthropocene Age we have a stronger impulse to the archive and look to the past, rather than face the unknowable effects of climate change. This is counterpointed by artists, whose hybrid practices engage with re-imagining and re-imagining today's world, thereby moving us forward into the unknown. '*Becoming*' is therefore another central theme.

The art archive is explored from multiple perspectives – as an artist, an art archive user and an archivist – noting that the subject, the consumer and the archivist all have very differing agendas. I question who uses physical archives today and how we can retain our sense of curiosity. I conclude with a link to an interactive artwork, which visualises, synthesises and expands this research.

Key words: Art Archives, Terra Incognita, Climate Change, Anthropocene Age, Cabinets of Curiosities

Into the Unknown: Navigating Spaces, Terra Incognita and the Art Archive

Introduction

This paper investigates what happens when someone who is lost attempts to navigate and find parallels between Terra Incognita and the art archive, and explores the points where mapping, archiving and collecting intersect. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Terra Incognita as ‘unknown land’ – it derives from early European colonialists’ attempts to map and navigate the world so that they could ‘collect’ it (Mauries, 2011, p. 12). Whilst the coastlines were usually roughly sketched in, the continental landmasses of the Americas, Africa, Australia, and more recently Antarctica, were dubbed Terra Incognita. In lieu of the actual data, entire continents were filled with fantastic drawings of flora and fauna. In *Archive Fever : A Freudian Impression*, the philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote about the archive in terms of privilege, about a fear of losing control of ‘knowledge’. I am proposing that whilst Terra Incognita is an admission of not having knowledge, it retains its sense of privilege, because the mapmaker was not just *imaging* space and land, but *imagining* it.

This topic will be investigated from the perspective that we are living in the Anthropocene age. The ecologist Eugene Stoermer suggests that we have entered a new geological era in which for the first time in the planet’s history, we as humans are making a permanent geological record on the earth’s ecosystems. Plutonium cores are embedded deep in the earth. Some landfill sites will never fully biodegrade. In the frozen Terra Incognita of the Arctic and Antarctica, ice cores are bored and translocated in portable freezers to be analysed in laboratories for the air, temperature, and even the seeds of millennia ago, so these cores are literally archives of a place over time. Therefore the landscape itself is now acting as a living cultural archive – henceforth referred to as the landscape-archive – on both global and local levels.

The artist George Steinmann states that we are ‘in a crisis of perception’ about the world itself and how we relate to it, and that if we are to re-imagine this relationship we need to think outside the traditional ‘boxes’ that disciplines impose (Engage 21, p. 5). How might artists (and their audiences) attempt to archive an

unknowable place such as Terra Incognita, and unimaginable entities such as climate change projections?

Working with key archivists around the UK, my aim is twofold – to investigate why we want to create and use archives in the 21st century, and to discover how they operate both ideologically and practically. This is a journey through the taxonomical distinctions between the archive, the collection and the library from multiple users' perspectives. I will explore the current debates relating to the archive such as open or closed systems, veracity and centres and peripheries. This will involve discussing the spaces of the archive and how context relates to time, chronology, and '*becoming*' in regard to the historical trace, collective memory and the monument.

Archives have attempted to make place and space meaningful over time – I am arguing that they are cultural narratives, and re-tracings. The geographer, Doreen Massey (citing cultural historian Jose Rabasa) talks about Terra Incognita acting as 'a complex palimpsest of allegories... The atlas thus constitutes a world where all possible "surprises" have been pre-codified' (2005, p.111). Both archives and maps promise mystery and discovery – yet this seemingly virgin territory has already been 'discovered' and 'mapped', either by the archivist or the indigenous people, so in theory the 'surprises' have already been discovered. How can a physical archive – however vast and comprehensive – be of interest to us today when there are many other distractions. Who would want to use it? Artist, Jayce Salloum raises a critical question: 'To amass an archive is a leap of faith, not in preservation but in the belief that there will be someone to use it, that the accumulation of these histories will continue to live, that they will have listeners.' (2006, p. 186). Why should we archive in the Anthropocene Age? Perhaps we feel the impulse to preserve what may soon become lost, particularly the landscape-archive.

The archive's interrupted trace

First, we need to investigate the archivist's intentions. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, philosopher Michel Foucault talks about the discontinuity of history and the methodological problems that this situation creates, because 'one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions' rather than seeking a continuum (1972, p. 4). He states that 'the archive defines a particular level; that of a practice that causes a

multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated' (Ibid, p. 146). It means that akin to Terra Incognita, all archives are inevitably partial – they cannot be complete. Foucault asserts that the archive 'establishes that we are different, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history the difference of times, ourselves the differences of masks' (Ibid, p. 147). It acknowledges the absent author, and how existing rhetoric can become a palimpsest.

Twenty four years later, in *Archive Fever : A Freudian Impression*, Derrida added to Foucault's proposition, stating that anything within an archive is effectively under house arrest, yet there is a key point of transition when these records move from the private to the public domain – at which point they become institutionalised. He discussed the tone set by citation, which means that the archive holds many dangers: the threats of violence, theatre, or being vain, mute, rhetorical, and/or self-destructive. Perversely, the stabilisation that the archivist aims to achieve creates amnesia and loss. The archive, therefore, carries the possibility to either kill the potency and power of objects, or to newly venerate them, thus creating 'archive fever'.

Archive fever has coincided with the rise of the museum – ninety six percent of the world's museums postdate WWII. According to Erica Campayne, archivist for the *London International Festival of Theatre* (LIFT), the notion that 'the past is prologue' was the impetus for setting up the LIFT and many other archives. (Remembering Practice, New Directions, Stratford, London. 5/7/11). This mantra implies that we are creating the future through interpreting the past, which offers both fantastic possibilities, but also dangers in regard to any institution. If the institution's need for an apparent sense of continuum outweighs a sense of self criticism and reflection, then their archive will become complete, and not as Foucault suggested: partial. As the philosopher Paul Ricouer noted, it becomes a self-reflexive closed system serving only the institution/archivist and not the researcher. We are concerned about forgetting, because if we do not remember what has passed we might be condemned to repeat it. However, according to Julie Bacon: 'It is precisely because we forget, that the way that memory takes place, its event or ritual, is as important as the invocation to remember and the materialistic emphasis on the content of the memory

itself' (www.interface.ulster.ac.uk/arkivecity, 12/7/11). So, if we delight in ritual of memory rather than actually remembering, is there a danger that the future will become the past, reinvented? Museum Director Pat Cooke reinforces this. 'The problem is that we tend to approach the archiving function with a prejudice towards knowledge or data mining and data collection, as if completeness and comprehensiveness was an itch that could be scratched into quietude, as if there was an ultimate gap that could be filled' (Bacon, 2008, p. 27). This resonates with the Terra Incognita mapmakers, and their impulse to fill in every gap on the map, regardless of their actual knowledge of the area.

I intend to shift this investigation's perspective from the artist or archivist to the potential user, by using the research tools that they would engage with when using an art archive. The primary research tool and retrieval system for all of the physical art archives that I visited are by either artist, or by the date/time of the launch/private view/performance. This is why I am investigating the archive through two parallel enquiries – Time as a navigation tool, and Artists as navigation tools.

Time as a navigation tool

Chronology and time, whether fragmented as Foucault stated, or a continuum, reside at the heart of the physical archive in three ways – philosophically, ethically, and practically. Derrida's statement that 'the archivisation produces as much as it records the event' implies that the archivist's power is rooted in the ways that material is indexed and cross-referenced, which inevitably creates centres and peripheries within the archive (1995, p. 17). For example, using the date of the launch or private view as a researching tool does not recognise the duration of either the event or the making process, and thereby marginalises time or process-based art practices.

If Foucault expounded the notion of history as rupture and discontinuity, the philosophers Bergson and subsequently Deleuze favoured temporality and duration, 'with a commitment to the experience of time' (Massey, 2009, p. 20). If transposed onto an archive, it would have been a celebration of a continuum of an artist/organisation/ideology. However as critical writer Boundas points out, this would favour 'things at the expense of processes, recognition at the expense of encounter, results at the expense of tendencies' (Ibid, p. 85). Deleuze and Bergson also discuss

continuous and discrete multiplicities, the former being articulated with succession while the latter are associated with evolution. They favour the continuous multiplicities, which support simultaneity, duration, fusion, and qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) evaluation. This durational approach allows the past, present and future a possibility of occupying the same mental (but not physical) space – that of always ‘*becoming*’, which seems so appropriate for an open system archive. The geographer Doreen Massey takes this one stage further by pleading for ‘the openness of that process of *becoming*’ (Ibid, p. 21), ‘we cannot ‘*become*’ (in other words) without others, and it is the space that provides the necessary condition for that possibility’ (Ibid, p. 56).

According to Massey, space is not a static slice through time, or a closed system, or a representation; it is inextricable from time, becoming space-time. As all art archives favour an indexing system based on the artist or the date of work, they therefore privilege time and the finished product at the expense of process, which is deeply problematic. ‘*Becoming*’ may be a way forward for the 21st century archivist to deal with Steinmann’s crisis of perception. It also creates an open invitation to the potential archive user to engage with research.

Artists as navigation tools

The art critic Hal Foster’s *An Archival Impulse* article focuses on artists whose practices are archival – as either methodology and/or product. He discusses paranoia, and ponders upon whether archival art may emerge out of lost information and a sense of failure in cultural memory. He cites artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn Douglas Gordon, Tacita Dean and Sam Durant, who ‘seek to make historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present’ (2004, p. 3). In line with Massey’s thinking, he notes their tendency towards using non-hierarchical spatiality in their installations. He says that artists such as Gordon are creating ‘time ready-mades’ which push the ‘notions of originality and authorship to the extreme’ (Ibid, p. 4). Other artists appropriate material in different ways creating secondary manipulations. This focus on the reinterpretation of information already in the public domain proves that ‘there is nothing passive about the word “archival”’ (Ibid, p. 6). Foster, akin to Jayce Salloum who I have cited earlier, asks key questions about how we relate to artwork – and by extension the art archive – in an age of mass

consumption of digital information, and sophisticated search engines. As already discussed, the search tools within physical archives are normally very simplistic compared to online searches.

Foster suggests that it is the artists' installations, physicality, and humanity that make them interesting to us. 'Although the contents of this art are hardly indiscriminate, they remain indeterminate, like the contents of any archive and often they are presented in this fashion – as so many promissory notes for further elaboration or enigmatic prompts for future scenarios' (Ibid, p. 5). This implies an open system approach, as the artworks often celebrate incompleteness and unfulfilled beginnings – similar to, but more inclusive than that of the mapper's Terra Incognita. They offer up spaces for the viewers' and visitors' narratives and their interventions. Foster states that there is a Deleuzian rhizomic impulse in much of these artists' work, whether they are engaging with collections, or a combination of approaches 'through mutations of connection and disconnection' (Ibid, p. 5). Therefore, there are issues about re-imagining, space, veracity, research tools and interaction for the future archive.

Four years later, the writer and curator Okwui Enwezor's *Archive Fever* exhibition in New York took ramification and the mutations of connection further by exploring the ways that artists have engaged with the archive through their use of documents and photographs, linking the two together, 'photography is simultaneously the documentary evidence and the archival record of such transactions' (2008 p. 12). As such he selected artists whose practice critiqued Foucauldian notions of truth, whether it was Land Art artists whose durational artwork relied on recording and documentation, or socio-political projects such as the Atlas Group, because these documents inevitably became transformed into monuments. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur agrees and discusses the monument lurking behind every document, and links collective memory with history and social narratives.

I want to explore the implications of Foster's and Enwezor's perspectives further through discussing artists whose artwork is sited in, or references the landscape-archive. This relates to the different ways that they engage with the

discourses surrounding cultural memory and unimaginable futures, including the imperative to engage with ecology – a key issue in the Anthropocene Age. I will start by exploring how the three artists have engaged with mapping, archiving, and collecting, as there are considerable overlap and arguments relating to these activities. Whilst trained archivists are very clear about these distinctions (e.g. an archive only contains unpublished material), artists actively enjoy subverting these slippery territories and languages. Therefore, I will be investigating this from an artist perspective rather than the researcher or archivist-

The artists-archivist's impulses: Mapping/collecting/archiving

Archive expert, Ben Cranfield's distinctions between an archive and a collection are a good starting point for this enquiry. 'Whilst archives are by definition objective, their formation is always political and their contents always partial. Furthermore, unlike collections which are the sum total of their parts, archives are always about what is not there. Whilst this partiality and subjectivity may seem like a reason not to archive, it is also a reason to form archives after a purpose and for a function.' (<http://thinking-room.org/gallery>, 5/8/11)

Nayia Yiakoumaki, the archive-curator at the Whitechapel Art Gallery concurs with the distinctions between a collection and an archive. 'Archiving has a particular organisation and structure which is necessary for it to be accessible and communicable. It is possible to collect without knowing why you do so. You can collect without giving the collection a structure, but you cannot archive without giving a reason, and a focus.' (Interview, 11/8/11). She goes on to say that 'an archive can inform a mapping process, or a mapping process can become an archive. It is possible to create maps through an archive – but this mapping is inevitably selective. Maps, in common with archives, have particular purposes and focuses.' (Interview, 11/8/11)

I will test the following distinctions. The collection is complete, just because there is no agenda to continue it – every new addition could be the last because of its circumstantial dynamics, so at any time a collection is the total of the sum of its parts. The archive has an agenda; it is partial, structured and outward facing because of its remit to be researchable. In addition, it can be momentary or permanent. A mapping

process (as opposed to a map) can become an archive, but I am arguing that an archive is not a map per se unless it contains Terra Incognita (i.e. is partial – there are bits missing). Mapping and archiving share similar political agendas, but the former is more likely to be selective or edit out information because of the map's historical role as a tool of power has the 'impulse to crystallize, comprehend and therefore control aspects of reality' (Whitfield, 2010, p. vii). I will explore this using artists' projects as case studies.

Artist-Collectors: A case study

Collectors often extract an entity from its original context, and bring it into another one. Jamie Shovlin's *'In Search of Perfect Harmony'* project (2006) presented to Art Now at Tate Britain, focuses on collecting. This artwork celebrates the amateur collector, and what happens when a private collection enters the public domain in a non-Derridan (i.e. institutional) way. The installation is inspired by Gilbert White an 18th century curate who meticulously observed and recorded the wildlife in his garden – in effect 'collecting' it. The artworks in Shovlin's quasi - collections include crayon drawings, constructed scrapbooks, slide shows and sound recordings. The exhibition's curator Rachel Tant describes Shovlin as an 'obsessive accumulator of material and information' (Tate Britain exhibition leaflet, 2007). He displays the collector's love of presentation, fearlessly blurring fact and fiction through involving himself in the work through the persona of Naomi V. Jelish – a 13-year-old artist whose name is an anagram of his.

Artist-archivists: A case study

Marks Dion's *'A Yard of Jungle'* involves an expeditionary field trip to Latin America. The project translocates a cubic yard of tropical rainforest soil across Brazil from Belem to Rio de Janeiro for an exhibition coinciding with the 1992 Earth Summit. In the gallery, he then systematically identified, recorded and archived the soils contents. The critical writer Miwon Kwon argues that this practice blurs the distinctions between Eco art with that of the 'history and fantasy of natural science', by re-enacting biologist William Beebe's (1877-1962) project which involved meticulously examining a square meter of rainforest earth on board of a ship returning to his native New York (1997, p. 40). Whilst Dion's practice takes many forms, that of mapping, collecting and archiving; this specific project is primarily about using

archiving methodologies as a critique of Beebe's (and Sciences') 'obsessive quest to "conquer" the unknowns of nature' (Ibid, p. 40). In many ways it is Dion – the (quasi) researcher - who becomes the specimen, rather than the artefacts or wildlife that he unearths.

Artist-Mappers: A case study

Chris Dorsett's artistic and curating practice engages with the distinctions between mapping, archiving, and collecting. However, I would argue that his '*Trees Walking*' project (2002-4) at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew primarily relates to mapping. The project is an example of open system pro-activeness, which fuses what is traditionally considered to be 'process' or 'produced'. I believe that in this instance he aims to blur the boundaries between the processes of collection as a research tool, and mapping as a tool/product. Dorsett's work focuses on how artworks are received and 'read' by an audience in different contexts. He states 'visitors (to Kew) construct their own equivalent of a prerequisite site of production using botanical and environmental research. For an artist, these places are certain to be uninhabitable' (2007, p. 85). In 2003, he joined Kew botanists doing research in the Amazon rainforest at the Ducke Reserva. These scientists were developing new taxonomic methods for a forest field guide, because the existing Linnaean ones were not fit for purpose in a tropical rain forest. These new ones involved taste and smell, so there was sensory and embodied approach to botanical research. This field of research made him aware about how incredibly difficult it was to walk in the rainforest – the antithesis of a promenade around Kew, which he described as a 'promiscuous space' (Ibid, p. 86). So on his return, he created signage to accompany a walking tour of the gardens using the images of trees and twigs as codes, which might engage with but not necessarily help visitors and botanists alike in navigating their way around.

These artists do not always sit comfortably in my case study categories. Is the trope of the map / collection / archive the most valid or useful way to analyse either artwork or approaches to archiving? I am not convinced that it is the case. There is a danger that this further set of distinctions reinforces a structuralist Foucauldian, rather than a rhizomic Deleuzian approach. Many of the strategies that my examples have used echo the ones identified by Foster and Enwezor – that of restaging/reconstructions; acts of remembrance; the blurring of fact and fiction; acts

of gathering; dislocation/translocation; and of course critiquing history. Might there be other ways to investigate the 21st century archive's collecting, mapping and archiving impulses? I will return to '*becoming*' and introduce hybrid art practices – that is to say artists who fuse the distinctions and techniques of the mapper, archivist or collector – in order to respond to this question.

Becoming: The hybridic approach

I will explore hybridic art practices in relation to both making artwork and developing 21st century archives – ones that are wary of creating monuments and continuums, and aim to address the uncertainties of the future, without forgetting the lessons of the past. These practices refute simplistic taxonomies. I will focus on two pairs of artists who have a strong environmental thread running through their practice. Foster states 'much archival art does appear to ramify like a weed ... perhaps any archive is founded on the disaster (or its threat)' (2004, p. 5). Climate change expert Kathryn Yusoff concurs, 'The archive, then, is a metaphor for the organised process of memory and forgetting that we institute into our structures of knowledge, and knowing places. What knowledge becomes useful to us in a time of abrupt climatic change? How can we creatively practice towards uncertainty?' (2008, p. 6). This is a crucial point when the landscape-archive itself has become so malleable in the Anthropocene Age.

The following art projects fundamentally question both our knowledge systems, and what we need to know at this time. Artist Thomas Hirschhorn speaks about creating artwork, which makes 'spaces for the movement and the endlessness of thinking' (Foster, 2004, p. 6). Whilst the past is still used as a prologue, the overriding urge is that of the future governing the present, and there is an increased sense of urgency about preserving a biodiversity that could become permanently lost – be it a plant, meadow, or a lagoon. Foster finishes his article by advocating '*becomingness*' as a way of recouping what was lost. These artists are rethinking the green environment – which is both an archive and Terra Incognita – and how it might be imaged, re-imagined and disseminated. This is vital when there is a very real possibility of ecological disasters taking place in some parts of the world because of climate change.

The artists Bryndis Snaebjornsdottir and Mark Wilson aim to ‘challenge anthropocentric systems and thinking that sanction loss through representation of the other’ (<http://www.snaebjornsdottirwilson.com/nanoqresearch.php>, 28/2/12). Working in collaboration with both private and public Natural History collections, their *Nanoq: Flat Out and Bluesome* (2001-06) is a survey of the UK’s stuffed polar bears. In addition to creating an online archive of the demise of the bears, in 2004, ten specimens were translocated to Spike Island Arts Centre space in Bristol, England for a temporary exhibition. Posed in different classical predatory positions, they became poignant and powerless when removed from their specific context of the collection. By presenting this dislocated and dispersed collection of stuffed bears, the artists challenge the mediatized and distanced image of the lone polar bear on a melting ice flow as a metaphor for climate change by literally bringing it much closer to home. They also critique the imagery of the bears as abject tropes and redundant metaphors. Much of this practice is rooted in thorough research and the generation of cultural discourse, ‘it was our intention to raise questions about our perceptions of the north, of power in nature, in culture and the tendency of images to supplant reality.’ (Ibid, 28/2/12)

The artists Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison state that ‘our work begins when we perceive an anomaly in the environment that is the result of opposing beliefs or contradictory metaphors’ (theharrisonstudio.net, 7/9/11). They are not simply collectors – they gather and transplant endangered native plants. For example, the *Bonn Meadow Project* (1994) involves translocating a 400-year-old meadow with endangered wild plants to the rooftop of the Kunst und Ausstellungshalle in Bonn, Germany. After two years in this rooftop ‘nursery,’ the meadow was further translocated to another two sites, one in the Rheinaue parks in Bonn, and the other to an Artpark in Austria.

Their *Greenhouse Britain* (2007-09) focuses on UK sea and water levels. It asks us to imagine the effects of climate change as an inversion of Terra Incognita, wherein it is the coastline rather than the interior of a country that becomes the uncertainty. Whilst previously each chosen site has been used as a metaphor or example of a broader ecological condition, *Greenhouse Britain* marked a shift from the purely local and the specific ‘site’, to a broader cultural space – Britain, and this

in turn was linked with the planet. They raise the issue about how we can cope with either the lack of, or excess of water around the world with 'grace'. According to David Haley, a collaborator with the Harrisons on this project, the term 'grace' is interpreted as '*becomingness*', thereby evoking an aesthetic, evolutionary and ethical metaphor' which again resonates with Massey's and Foster's use of the term (Engage 21, p. 15).

Therefore, with these artist partnerships we have a new approach to both archiving and engaging with the archive – a ramified, rhizomic one that pops up in different places around the world – that is highly collaborative, and therefore celebrates multiple authorships. They agree with Felix Guattari's notion of art's transversality discussed in '*The Three Ecologies*,' which linked different spheres and orders of experience. These cross-disciplinary projects are beyond being 'hybrids' – they are simultaneously artist-environmentalists, artist-biologists, and artist-archivists-collectors-mappers. What can we learn from them with regard to the art archive?

Conclusion

The above artists clearly agree with George Steinmann's comment that we are 'in a crisis of perception' about the world itself and how we relate to it, and that it in the Anthropocene Age it needs to be re-imagined and re-visualised. (Engage 21, p. 5). There are some things that we do not want to have knowledge of – for example, what exactly is being lost from the biodiversity of the landscape-archive, and what we in the 'developed' part of the world might have to give up in order to arrest climate change. These uncertainties make us want to bury our heads in the sand rather than developing our meta-cognition and vision for the future, so there is a real danger that we may lose our sense of curiosity and discovery. The dichotomy of not wanting to know about the future, whilst having the impulse to preserve our planet's past and present in case we lose it, can be addressed by using hybridic approaches to archives and how we engage with them for the future.

I hope that I have convinced you that the conventional art archive's navigation systems create centres and peripheries, which thwart the researcher and are ideologically unsound. The nexus of the archive, culture and the monument is also

riddled with dangers, as is our desire to either create a continuum or only engage with fracture. It is only through exploring ‘*becoming*’ and ‘*becomingness*’ in regards to space-time, through having an embodied understanding of place, that we can rid ourselves of the burden of abstracted neo-colonialist spaces such as Terra Incognita. Given these issues, how might an archive operate appropriately and invitingly today? I will return to the 18th century Cabinet of Curiosity to find out.

I am proposing that the Cabinet of Curiosity – ironically a by-product of the colonialism that the Terra Incognita maps facilitated – could become re-imagined as a 21st century art archive. The aim is to create a place-space of curiosity engaging with a spirit of performativity and becoming, which is inviting to all researchers with their diverse research strategies. According to Erica Campayne, ‘Diving in, Bouncing off, Light Exploration, and Deep Exploration are all legitimate ways to research in an archive’, so the archivist should build in these possibilities in terms of their researching and navigation tools. (Remembering Practice, New Directions, 5/7/11). Perhaps endless cabinets of curiosity – please note the shifts from singular to plural and vice versa and into the lower case – are the way to invite meta-cognition and bridge the impulse to preserve with a forward looking vision.

It would be a rich conceptual starting point in a century where (in the ‘developed’ world at least), finding data and information online is so easy that it can remove the challenge, sense of discovery and wonder that researching used to hold. Additionally, in the age of Wikipedia what might definitive knowledge be, and what exactly constitutes fact or fiction? If we are to move into the unknown, including the unknowable consequences of the climate change, how do we engage with data, information, and transform it into ‘knowledge’? To paraphrase Yusoff, I suggest that we creatively archive within and without what we perceive as being a certainty.

Please visit:

<http://prezi.com/bj9v8qkqk-6c/terra-incognita-cabinets-of-curiosity/?kw=view-bj9v8qkqk-6c&rc=ref-10840913>

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