The hidden archive:
an investigation into the history of the unseen

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Submitted to the Board of Printmaking

School of Art and Design

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts

Purchase College

State University of New York

December 2018

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Abstract

“You know the murmurs. They come from your own throat.
You are the bridges to the city and the blazing food-plant green;
The sun of plants speaks in your voice...” [1] (Rukeyser)

How does one recount the events of the past? What does the process of remembering look like? Are the moments of the past chosen and isolated in one's mind, or is it something nostalgic, even primordial in which our answer lies?

The archive will serve as the central theme for our investigation into the past. Though the archive as an object of looking back must be strictly defined. The collecting of archival records is not entirely our goal, because we will see that the records themselves cannot always be accurate accounts of what transpired. We must not only collect those manuscripts, maps, diaries, logs, and histories of yesterday; but this collection must be acutely observed if we are to illuminate this question of remembering. There exists two levels in the process of recounting: one is the collection of archival information described above; and the other, the more intimate, describes *everything else which remains*. It is the description of that which is nearly impossible to hold onto, an insight into the actual experience pertaining to any given event or memory. Muriel Rukeyser's poetry accesses this in two levels, where she solidifies the image of the present and the image of the unspoken memory. It is within the *unspoken* that awaits a clarification and illumination previously unseen. And this memory, the one that is not characterized solely by those formal constraints is where the key to an investigation lies. We will have to be observant in our reading, attuned to our original texts, and question the authority of the archive in order to make sense of the holes in between interpretation. Because in order to face the past in all its complexity- in all of it’s violence, one must understand the present condition of the catalogue. We are dealing with a collection of documents in order to intimately search for an alternative answer. We hope to slowly use the mainstream archive as a beginning structure to look into.

The goal in this process is not only to acknowledge that things *have been* forgotten: which we will see is a distinct phenomena through history, but to illuminate the process of misinformation, of information altered or lost in time. It seems a nearly impossible task to establish a foundation to something that was “never there” to begin with, but the unseen archive *tends to establish notable symbols and examples which dialectically establish a reseeing of events.* We will see that this foundation is a vital source in recounting the unseen critically and honestly; to hopefully provide a minor insight into the story of things forgotten.

The beginning of an alternative archive

Language

We will first use the foundation of language to investigate an ‘alternative archive’. Without the evolution of language one would not be able to fully understand the story of the ‘mainstream archive’ itself. It is the first of many examples to investigate what is left or unseen, providing an essential source to investigate the current archive to a greater degree.

But alike to the progression of language which builds off of an original structure (i.e. Proto-Germanic, Proto-Greek) then evolves, *the language of the unseen archive engages in constant change which marks its progression.* By investigating what is specifically *forgotten in words and writing,* one begins to break down the history of an alternative plot, of an unseen situation. “Pathology of communication is not only a fact of writing. It also exists in spoken languages: stammerings, mispronunciations, regional accents, dystonias, and cacophonies. Likewise in the technical means of communication: background noise, jamming, static, cut-offs, hysteresis, various interruptions. If static is accidental, background noise is essential to communication.” [2] As Serres notes, by looking intently at the development of language, one begins to grasp the scenarios of what is both *seen* and what is *not present.* In other words, the first document used to describe an event is only a beginning structure to extrapolate a deeper insight. When one uses the primary source of the journal or ledger, one must make sense of *‘cacography’**, or the mistakes of “bad writing” or “bad translation” laid throughout any history in order to define the quiet undercurrents of experience. It is exactly within these ancestral “mistakes” that the unseen is eventually contacted and commented upon. It is within the static of thoughts, words, archives, and histories, that lives every experience ever told and ever erased.“...Simply to write is to risk jumbling a form- in the same way, to communicate orally is to risk losing meaning in noise.” *The noise of everyday conversations, instances of violence, struggles, and erasure are only sprawled in between the lines of seen language.* It is indeed a risk to investigate the unseen because it constantly interacts with external forces which changes its meaning. In order to witness a truer story, one has to investigate these subtle mistakes in order illuminate a new situation.

If we were to use the history of language as a way to access the unseen, we must consider the context of this engagement. When marking the origin of a historical translation, one begins to understand the division between what information is noted and forgotten, heard and unheard, seen and unseen. When one follows the archive there is a beckoning question which insists upon the story: where does this historical document originate from, and whose iteration of history are we hearing? Within these records exists the right to transfer history through text- and specifically the right to tell one's own narrative. This right to pass down history can be categorized as whose writing matters and whose does not, which stories are essential, and which can be forgotten. [3]. Written history is always prone to mistranslations of static and noise, so what narratives have survived the combative noice to be included into the canonization of history and which have been forgotten?

If the mainstream archive functions on what is essential information to catalogue, then a form of *authoritative remembering* is the only basis for any contact with the past. *We are left within a canonized language of history, taken from the perspective of voices passed down, not omitted.* This is placed exactly opposite to the unseen because it is through this determined written history that we solidify a story as truly factual. In this world of the canonized story, only the popular telling of history is seen and regarded as fact. *The realty of language and the translated archive is that every event includes vast differentiations in experience, every event involves static and the fragmentation of narrative.*

Though this begs a second question: is the language being used to describe history- to catalogue this missing story sufficient? Are the catalogues of famous archives, logs, diaries, journals, history books, textbooks, art collections, etc, rightly used as the defining structure for our understanding of experience? Perhaps the language of the seen archive begins to gage with the unseen; but it's only contact is in what it fails to do. It is within the margins of the main story- within the noise of quiet static and “bad handwriting” that tells of an alternative story. We are able to acknowledge a quiet history precisely by what it *fails to say in between the lines*. It is within the reexamining of the canonized narrative that we are able to break down a second story, a new possible story. *This finally starts to create an alternative communication; where one discovers that the canonized story is not a valid source, but is meant to be extrapolated by what is missing from its catalogue.* From this realization, one can start to build on the unseen from what was previously undiscovered.

Unfortunately, the only basis for alternative storytelling is often in the rubble of the seen archive. Though through this original structure, a number of illuminations can take form that would be impossible without the proto-language and mainstream catalogue to work from.

Fire, dreaming and violence

“If all that can be changed slowly can be explained by life, all that changes quickly is explained by fire” [4]

We will investigate a number of distinct symbols which are important metaphors for the unseen. Fire is one of the most distinct images for our investigation in search of an alternative archive. There are two acts of ‘fire memory’ that I will outline in this investigation: looking back out of *reverie* and the act of looking back in *violence*. Fire speaks to both of these engagements through its chemical and psychological qualities. It eventually locates itself in the middle of these two extremes, between the archive as a comforting reverie, and the archive as a location of perpetual violence.

From the beginning of one's life fire takes on the image of discovery and wonder. A child displays an innocent aloofness to the danger of fire, not recognizing the innate harm of the flames. Instead, the young child forges a consoled image alike to the mother cooking a meal over the flame. The child mimics the young Prometheus in his need to hold fire, even when the dangers are apparent to those older than him. This is because the act of controlling fire is in itself an act of maturity, and mimics the responsibility only the father or mother is able to possess. Nevertheless, the child cements a first association of comfort, sitting beside the fire in concentrated reverie. *This is the first memory of dreaming before the flames*. It is this primary and introductory experience which is an important step in providing the conditions to look into one's own past. The ability to dream before the fire is an origin that always seems to come back because it is an initial step towards a state of comfort. And with this initial event, the child starts to forge a lasting catalogue of memories in which dreaming can flourish. *During this event the first instance of one's own archive takes shape*. As time goes by, the comfort of that first fire is contacted by a series of lasting memories; reminisced when the reminders of a dish or a cold winter night are provoked. But it is with this *concrete realty* of dreaming- before we even realize what dreaming signifies, which starts to solidify the act of remembering. Bachelard would say its the “fire which consumes us then enlightens us. The haphazard passion becomes the deliberate passion and *love becomes family- fire becomes hearth and home*”[5].We are left in the space of the home, where memories are accumulated in excess. By first contact with the flame one is able to create memories which fuel an perpetual nostalgic looking back.

Though fire maintains the essential characteristics of nostalgia which become both apparent and abstracted as the child becomes older, fire also creates an equally essential mode of danger in the child's mind. There’s not just an insinuated or theoretical danger in *playing with the flames*. Once they get too close to the fire, they receive their first lesson in its *ability to destroy*. So at the same time that a first tranquility grows within the child's mind, so does a more pertinent danger of fire as a possible vehicle for violence. The initial danger of ‘the child getting too close to the flame’ is a good starting place to explain any fearful or violent memories of one's past. This language of the *violent flame* is precisely what we will come to terms with.

When one looks into their past, one must not only concede in those nostalgic moments of life, (the moments of the meal and the cold winter's night); in order to understand the panorama of experiences shown in the fire we must acknowledge violence. This takes place when *the endangerment of the fire becomes as pertinent as its ability for reverie*. This is the site where one's dreams are forgotten, lost, or misrepresented: fire also embodies violence. 'The serious traumatism that a psyche can suffer from that which has been set on fire: the sight of the great haystack or the roof'. *There is a trauma in the flames which tracts and defines one's own history.* These memories are able to be witnessed within the flames and becomes a tangible aspect in the process of archiving ones past. Observing the fire is a special phenomenon because it possesses the power to illuminate a memory of violence or a reverie previously unknown.

Fire is a distinct symbol in that it accesses both our naive and nostalgic experiences, while simultaneously calling back to the angry, violent, and repressed in the same flames. Fire- which in its symbolic form represents renewal, destruction, romance, desire, and sexuality, are all qualities to contact the love and deep trauma of human experience. Indeed, fire covers two territories of the same map: that which establishes looking back out of joyful nostalgia- and the other looking back, out of erasure and violence. *It is able to do this by naming and subsequently cementing the lineage of events:* "fire was precisely the first- the first phenomenon, on which the human mind reflected...the dreaming man seated before the fireplace is the man concerned with the inner depths, a man in the process of development; fire leads to a reverie that carries a special kind of attention, which has nothing in common with the attention in watching or observing- it is rarely utilized for any other kind of contemplation".[6]

Fire is an important symbol for the archive because both the archive/flame influence and characterize one another. The archive names and develops a concrete catalogue of remembering, while equally becoming more intangible and unclear as time passes. In this way, *both the fire and the archive are sporadic renderings; a watercolor of constantly shifting events that can only be explained through stories which mirrors its own state of uncertainty*. Bachalard claims that the fire is a "...ravening, insatiable animal which devours everything that experiences birth and growth, that finally devours itself when there's nothing left to feast upon"[7]. *Here he is referring to a collection of memories which is built up by warm nostalgia, but simultaneously has the ability to quickly obliterate any insight*. This 'insatiable animal' embodies- and starts to define, the deeply comforting and equally dangerous memories in one's life. With this 'insatiable animal' looking into our past is difficult, because it creates the conditions for memories to be tampered or erased completely. As a symbol, fire possess the dual power of caressing and taking care of memories, while simultaneously sparking the violence of erasure. When we start to view the fire as an object to remember, we begin to characterize a phenomena of experiential memory. This is an essential point: *fire is the first act of reference to deal with the long list of experiences that forges the archive*. It is in this experiencing and subsequent looking back, that the archive receives its initial form and first takes shape as an amalgamation of collected memories. It is true that the "the substatialistic qualities of fire easily reconciles its contradictory characteristics: fire can be quick and rapid in its dispersed forms, and deep and lasting in its concentrated forms".[8] This is an important point because fire characterizes a parallel of catalogued violence and love.

Even before a child has words, he has the ability to dream into the fire and to see his own dreams and struggles plastered into the flames.

Fire not only represents the individualistic process of looking back, but also shows the searching of a wider memory which makes up the collective archive. To consider fire is to gain access into a multitude of collective human experiences, making it possible for a second story to be defined and tract. This dreaming and inherent danger within the fire is present even if we were to broaden our criteria to not just the child's story, but to mankind's as well. When prehistoric man placed two sticks in his hand to spark the fire, it was both out of survival and out of love. It was not just a necessary action that symbolized the act of survival, but represented a slow, joyfull, act of renewal. Bachelard speculates that primitive man created fire at the same time he learned how to sing. But just as Bachelard discusses the 'child getting too close to the flames' the prospect of danger or fear in the fire is quite real for past man:

"He was about to hurl his thunderbolts
At the whole world, but failed, fearing heaven
Would burn from fire so vast, and pole to pole would
Break out in flame and smoke and he remembered
The fates had said that someday land and ocean,
The vault of heaven, the whole worlds
Mighty fortress, besieged by fire would perish." [9]

Zeus states this as he's about to set the world on fire; he wanted to punish man for showing selfishness and exhibiting violence. He long considered the implication of punishment by flame, though Zeus worried about the encompassing nature of fire: Its condition being *too* destructive. In fact, his concern came from the idea that a fire so vast had the ability to endanger the heavens themselves. This story represents fire's ability to renew the world, while outlining its counter-capability for complete destruction. The decision to *not* use fire embodies the threshold between control and utter destruction, between dreaming and looking back in violence, between sensuality and annihilation. Clearly Zeus's fire was one out of anger not love- punishment, and not intimacy. The world of Grecian myths makes numerous references to both the fire of intimacy and the flame of destruction. From the fire burning within a lover- when Echo silently follows Narcissus and is revealed because she was "burning with a closer flame", to Tereus explaining upon first glance his attraction to Philomena stating he "took fire, as ripe grain burns, or dry leaves burn....He was a passionate man, and all the Tracians/ Are all too quick at loving; a double fire/ Burnt in him…"[10] *These examples exhibit the important relationship between ancient man and fire*. This personification of fire as sexual attraction is not simply a metaphor to compare burning with desire, but a way of investigating the pertinent and real fire played in ancient man's mind. One could claim that this same 'ancient fire' is presently alive in each person whose had the opportunity to contemplate among the flames. As Bachelard speculates "one would say that the

miner has in his veins the inner fire of the earth which excites him to explore its depths”[11]. *It is precisely this original fire which is our access into the archive- it a tactile memory that defines a memory that came before us.* Although the memories which make up that fire have change, fire as a mechanism for looking back remains an essential symbol for our goal in explaining the archive. In order to illuminate the long list of catalogued experiences both erased and present, we will attempt to form an archive by what is within the flames of memory. The combination of experiential reverie and violence forms the language to first see into the hidden archive- into the hidden flame of memory itself. This is the foundational relationship between the fire of the past and the archive: to catalogue the dream.

The Natural world and the despised

Once we acknowledged that an alternative archive is possible, one starts to wonder further on the basis of this hidden story. What mode of contact can we use to create it? Fire is just one of many symbols to categorically locate the hidden archive. So what do the other symbols which define this second story look like? As seen by fire, the relationship of the unseen to the natural world establishes a grounding which starts to unwind the steps of a 'true' remembering. Here, we begin with one special characteristic of the natural archive: its intimate relationship with the "despised". The despised are defined as any people who are subjugated to the shadows of history, whose stories are ignored individually or intergenerationally. Their story is often defined by the margins of history itself- living in the margins of the canonized archive. It is the action of one's history and catalogue of experiences being erased from the mainstream archive. Muriel Rukeyser, Hannah Arendt, James Baldwin, Seamus Heaney, and Mardsen Hartley, among others, *describe an innate relationship between the despised and the natural world*. In Rukeyser's poetry she uses her words as a metaphor for her people close to the land below:

You are close to that surf, and the leaves heated by noon, and
the star-ax, the miner's glitter walls. The crests of the sea
Are the same strength you wake with, the darkness is the eyes
of children forming for a blaze of sight and soon, soon,
Everywhere your own silence, who drink from the crater, the
nebula, one another, the changes of the soul. [12]

When Muriel Rukeyser discusses the character whispering and murmuring,'drinking from the crater' she is talking about her own history- in all of her isolation which cannot be described by what is necessarily present. She dictates that one's relationship to the earth is essential in the forming of experience, in solidifying a new possible dwelling place. A basic tenet of the despised is a lack of belonging to any given area, or a lack of a cultural home in the place one is forced to settle in. This creates an alternative home that is centralized in less favorable environments. *The position of the dirt and the sun is a home to those "other" people, and is in effect the grounding for a an alternative living place.* This is not always a literal living place, but is often the space for metaphorical thoughts to be housed- to be able to thrive and grow within mental safe keeping. This home was not necessarily chosen but given out of exclusion and isolation; nevertheless it is a foundation that has been appropriated by the despised. The symbols of the natural world hold a history which can illuminate the story of the other. Though further, without the foundation of the natural world, an intimate insight would be difficult to reach. The metaphors associated with Rukeyser's earth create a world to investigate the silent cries of those lost in the static of

time- who are forgotten within the mainstream catalogue. *Poetry in this context is a way to combat erasure and enlist the natural world as a mechanism for survival.*

Hannah Arendt notes that the Jewish people find refuge in the presence of the natural world; where she asserts that the pariah (an iteration of the despised) has a grounding on nature precisely out of his exclusion from the societies of dignified peoples. “We know them from the songs of oppressed and despised peoples who, so long as man does not aspire to halt the course of the sun, will always seek refuge in nature”[13]. That for Jews, without this interaction with the intimate natural world, one's identity and state of being would be lost. Ones history, and ones story of movement from the past to present would be an extremely difficult point to contact; “And the greatest injury which society can and does inflict on him is to make him doubt the reality and validity of his own existence, to reduce him in his own eyes to a status of nonentity”[14]. In other words, the mainstream story ignores the intricacies of the despised experience by creating a catalogue of existence without any acknowledgment of them. *So to ignore this innate relationship between the despised otherness and the natural world would be to ignore an essential quality which makes up the world of the despised.* This interaction is essential to form an actual relationship to the archive. But alike to the act of fire, any natural object associated with the archive of the pariah is transitionatory in nature. Here is the quieted, second story *of the diaspora, movement, and non-belonging*- experiences that can only be illuminated by earthly objects which parallel their own qualities. So the importance of cataloging the natural world is clear: if one is able to solidify the objects which embodiment the story of the despised, then one can begin to form a second archive based on this intricate knowledge. *Now we are not only cataloging in between documents of the past, but contacting the world of objects which parallel the act of being forgotten- of becoming a non entity*.

There are numerous examples of this phenomenon from the poetry of Ovid, Rukeyser, Seamus Heaney and T.S Eliot, to the political commentary of Hannah Arendt and James Baldwin. Baldwin characterizes the state of being a Black American, where his personal history is intertwined with the history of his ancestors who arrived to America as slaves during the Age of Exploration. A new connection between one's personal story and the intimate violence of collective memory is forged: “And it is because the American people are unable, to face the fact that in fact I am flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone, create by them; *my blood, my father's blood is in that soil, they can’t face that*”[15]. The image of ‘my fathers blood in that soil’ is not simply metaphorical, it catalogues the image of the other in a concrete and tragic situation, where the unheard violent-experience is forged and found- it is precisely what the mainstream is unable to take. *It is not equipped to see the intricacies of a people's past which is defined by a multitude of deeply overlayed experiences*. The only thing which begins to justly tell of these intricacies is the natural world, where an alternative image is able to take form. Heaney, when describing the act of his father digging for potatoes each day in the field refers to the process as an ‘altar to the famine god’, T.S Eliot in his poem “East Coker” calls to nature as a parallel to time by its constant state of change:

“In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,

Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur, and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf".[16]

Within the everyday struggle of the despised, as well as the larger struggle of intergenerational and collective trauma, overlooked objects take on the added weight of an intimate past experience. With this, a certain unnamed quality reveals itself through these objects, simply by their very interwoven insights. *If language is continually engaging with static, interfering frequencies, and time, then natural objects of the natural world also become both progressively more illuminated and more abstract. The parallel between objects of the natural world and language is that by their very nature both cannot function without ongoing iterations of change. This is the reason objects of the earth; already transient and influx in its nature(i.e. wind, water, fire, smoke, flowers) embody this dislocation par-excellence. Natural objects refuse to remain as single state but are constantly evolving, growing, dislocating, and dying; it is the perfect metaphor for despised people, whose very record of history is predetermined by the diasporic and cyclically dislocated experience*.

Our focus is how these paired down symbols mimic language and start to arrive at the unseen archive. Again, specific objects such as the flower form a condition to peer back through its innate qualities and the prevailing virtues of its symbolism: rebirth, spirituality, death, decay, and romance [17]. These distinct associations form a story of quieted experiences: a story difficult to put into words and more difficult to represent in a multifaceted narrative. Of course, nature only begins to justly reflect the story of the other. These symbols only begin to isolate specific moments of the archive, to track natural objects which sculpt meaning through one another. The symbol of fire and flowers for example share a multitude of connections with fire: rebirth, destruction, spirituality, etc., all essential qualities in our previous investigation into the pertinence of flame and memory. *Though why do these two seemingly incongruous symbols converge to tell the story of the unseen experience?* Both lay the groundwork for an investigation, a dialogue of how we strategize remembering. And more importantly, both lay the groundwork with the intent to contact the forgotten archive, the catalogue the unseen and previously unaccounted for. Keifer notes, "For a plant, blossoming is so intense, it dies from it. The plant incarnates itself as fully as possible, actually even beyond the possible, so that it's consumed in the effort. Thus the image of ashes and before that the exhibitionism, already even a hint of self-destruction on the release of the flower's perfume, consider the store of dried roses in the attic." [18] The Flower possess the image of a renewal within the midst of destruction. As a result, the flower is the embodiment of an experience seen and unseen, representative of the many primary experiences where growth and destruction were found. It is also the sight of many different stories, of individual and intergenerational narratives. It is the site where

quiet retellings are illuminated and erased quickly, where one's experiences either wither away or grow in real time. *The unseen is in accordance to the floral metaphor, where information, insight, and quiet whispering are only momentarily witnessed before the entire field goes up in flames.* It solidifies the image of the archive by its very transitionatory nature, the site of memories lost and found, growing and dying. *But rather than the state of archival documentation which looks linear in the wake of events, the sight of the fire, the flower, and the unseen, work unilaterally, always intersecting to form new memories, reflections and parallels, back to its own cycle of existence*. The fire and the flower remain a sturdy image of the memories which one personally and collectively cement in their subconscious. These phenomena of nature act as a personification of any anecdotal retellings of one's past. Just as we've discussed fires ability to create the conditions to dream for the young viewer, the flower and fire equally provide innumerable opportunities to stare into its life cycle and see ones desire and pain in its blooming.

Further what the natural world and the despised exemplify is the embodiment of those elements which represent the hidden experience; that one could say *the natural world holds every untold truth which has been forgotten by time and man. One cannot simply say that the despised finds comfort and consolidation within the hands of the natural world, but rather, a collection of concrete experiences are cemented on the very earth they were forged on.*

The violent Archive in its current state

If our goal is to reconsider the historic catalogue as it has/will continue to function, then how are we recalling past events, let alone contacting a future archive? We have discussed the possibility of an archive through specific symbols, but what about the story itself? Who is telling the story that makes up this 'mainstream archive' and what information is being reiterated, fragmented, morphed, or omitted, just like the evolution of language? One major quality of the archive is its leaning toward a *canonized structure*. One must acknowledge that mainstream recalling was often separated by individuals who had the ability to recount, and those who did not. With this point we are led to a few questions: why has the mainstream archive only imagined a certain image of the story, and what is the image of the archive depending on who possesses the ability to recount? What is the image of an archive forged by the hands of the powerful? What does this indicate about the archive; and even more deeply, what does it say about the hidden archive for future contact? One must commit to contextualizing the mainstream archive- to start to acknowledge a history of forged stories and the possession of power. If one was to catalogue the archive in its mainstream state, we begin to notice a collection of documents forged by the hands of the powerful. *These very documents, the clues for our past and future contact with history are gauged by one principal: who has the right to document their iteration of history.*

When we acknowledge those "others" who are unable to represent the complexity of their story (we may refer to the other as the despised*[19]) *we catalogue and encounter a different narrative not fully realized, one radically different than the predominate one in its structure and implication. This alternative archive can be seen as a catalogue of the diasporic experience; one of missing anecdotes, sprawling cacographies, and the erasure of one's own narrative in the mainstream archive. These are counter-narratives unable to be told because the possession of power limited any alternative story.* The hidden story might be witnessed as a sprawling of notes always on the move and never stable- a counter position that holds essential insights which were limited by the mainstream telling of a louder story. Or as Hartman suggests: "it is a story predicated upon impossibility—listening for the unsaid, translating misconstrued words, and refashioning disgured lives—and intent on achieving an impossible goal: redressing the violence that produced numbers, ciphers, and fragments of discourse, which is as close as we come to a biography of the captive and the enslaved [20]

Often we rely on the archive, or any other historic body of texts (i.e. history books, diaries, logs, art collections) as a grounding on how we interpret the progression of the event, it is the mainstream archive which is often the only remaining information we can engage with. Many times, the only way of looking back to a given event is to read the catalogue of information and use it as an authoritative source. As a result, we investigate both what is written down in the mainstream archive, and what is chosen to be omitted. *In order to investigate any counter narrative, the archive must be used as a tool to dissect hidden meaning. In this state, one must use what is not present to illuminate any information remaining in the*

archives wreckage. Through this process of resseing we discover the gaps of traditional archive: that mainstream retelling of an event cannot justly be used as an authoritative source for investigation. *The canonized catalogue cannot continue to be the standard for attaining an accurate representation to what once transpired.* The very foundation of a structured archive holds a mandate on what is seen as essential information to possess and catalogue, what are essential stories to be detailed and retold. *In other words, to look back into a collection of documents which details history, is to see it from the perspective of those who possessed any ability to canonize it. There is a single basis that surrounds the information we use as historic fact: whose narrative mattered in the story and whose was able to be reconfigured and omitted.* The fact of the archive is immediately suspect when one takes into account the person forging it. In the example of slavery in the North American continent, much of the information we are able to gauge is from the entry logs, diaries, and manuscripts of slave captains/owners who wrote detailed their notes and cemented them. This has created the structure for a perpetual image of what slavery was and how it operated. In many cases, a slave was not afforded the tools nor resources to discuss pains and tribulations; *one was simply seen as an anonymous story without history or origin. As a result, there is a wide gap between the primary archive and the despised archive which reflects one's own experience.* The archive is left with a widening gap, where any information one desires to read into is superseded by a stronger answer of violence from the slave captains notes. The hands of those in power create a situation where only *their* words, communications, and interpretations, are seen as sufficient portrayals of the event, and this fact is an important prelude for our belief in a 'fact based retelling' of the past. The oppressed or the despised are left unable to tell the stories of their own lives in their own words. *The gap in narrative, the hole where the despised voice lives is precisely in the depths of the archive. The multitude of experiences that were witnessed are now silenced and retold as a single narrative of violence.* Sometimes this violence leads to an essential retelling, but any narrative of the despised is often suppressed and morphed by both louder voices and time. As Hartman points out in her study of an anonymous slave called Venus who was on board a slave ship and eventually thrown overboard along with her companion:

"One cannot ask, "Who is Venus?" because it would be impossible to answer such a question. There are hundreds of thousands of other girls who share her circumstances and these circumstances have generated few stories. And the stories that exist are not about them, but rather about the violence, excess, mendacity, and reason that seized hold of their lives, transformed them into commodities and corpses, and identified them with names tossed out as insults and crass jokes. *The archive is, in this case, a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhea, a few lines about a whore's life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history. Given this, "it is doubtless impossible to ever grasp [these lives] again in themselves, as they might have been 'in a free state.'"* [21] (my italics)

One must consider the mainstream archive in its actual form, not as an iteration of a history fully recorded but partially illuminated. The fate of an alternative history is based on this hope: *to use the mainstream archive in all of its mistammerings, miscommunication, and failure, to one day complete the catalogue of missing answers.* Unfortunately, in this ambiguous state many more questions are created

rather than answers, but it illuminates an important alternative to violence as the building block for future contact. At this point in time we cannot use idealistic, fact based narratives as the basis of history: we must intently focus upon the archive in its livid quietness, in its silent cries. *To create an alternative through the seemingly complete archive is to start a counter narrative of those chosen to be erased, and to create alternative answers.* Of course what we'll always be left with is the information of the mainstream history. In fact, often we are only left with the remaining pieces of this story to rearrange and re-see as they're falling apart. One must acknowledge that what we use as historical information, the very basis of it, is still an answer forged from the first hand experience of violent power. But through an attempt to resee, the mainstream archive provides an eventual retelling of stories in between the lines of implemented violence and power. *In some capacity, this half formed, half seen/unseen archive will have to suffice in order to gauge any alternative for a history unknown*.

One wishes for a completely new system: an entirely new guideline for the archive where it could be forged by those who *possess archival autonomy*- who speak to the violence taken from them. However, our present condition leaves no room for a history without the one already forged. *The archive solidifies itself as a state of innumerable points of violence while co-existing as an essential source for future change.* Because we cannot achieve essential insights without this preexisting violence, the present space between past violence and present illumination will have to do. Or as Hartman states in reference to a hypothetical alternative where the two girls aboard this slave ship could have found comfort and even love within the presence of one another before their deaths: "But in the end I was forced to admit that I wanted to console myself and to escape the slave hold with a vision of something other than the bodies of two girls settling on the floor of the Atlantic...In the end, I could say no more about Venus than I had said about her friend: "I am unsure if it is possible to salvage an existence from a handful of words: the supposed murder of a negro girl." [22].

One unfortunate aspect of the archive is the cyclical nature of its violence. Even when one attempts to find an alternate answer in the canonized archive, one is also enacting a new violence onto the story of the despised. *By trying to investigate true story of the past, one can inevitably open up a gash of violence previously dormant or not illuminated. A distinct quality of this violence is that the "despised" must relive this past everytime the archive is re-examined and sifted through.* To an extent, the mainstream process of erasing the despised prevents us from fully entering an alternative story. All we know are the acts perpetrated onto them, and perhaps we will never have a full enough understanding of what really happened to create a new archive. But one must attempt to overlook these hesitations and forge an alter narrative with the clues of the past (in between the violence of traditional narratives) is an essential cause. "We only know what can be extrapolated from an analysis of the ledger or borrowed from the world of her captors and masters and applied to her. *Yet the exorbitant must be rendered exemplary or typical in order that her life provides a window onto the lives of the enslaved in general.***"** [23] (my italics)

To the best of our ability our goal is to catalogue the disaster of history: the lost voices of those not given the logs, ledgers, notebooks, diaries etc to archive the violence perpetrated onto them. This is precisely why objects of the natural world have such importance in this investigation: they represent at the very least an initial feeling of the cries of violence, experience, and the crime of the erased archive. *And further, by extrapolating meaning out of the canonized archive, (which perhaps was never meant to be dissected) we will create a counter narrative and hopefully establish it as an essential new narrative, to live alongside the predominate one in all of its complexity*. Though in our current archive (the one *seen* compared to *unseen, canonized* compared to *hidden*) violence is an all encompassing narrative that does little but perpetuate a linear state of historic and archival violence. [24]

Part 2. The museum as a living catalogue

The Wunderkammer and sensoriality

The second part of the hidden archive details the history of institutions. We will investigate a number of institutional bodies such as the museum. Though alike to our first characterization of symbols and stories that represent the archive, the history of the museum reveals major insights which parallel the development of the mainstream catalogue. *The art collection is an essential point of contact to discuss the intimate relationship between historic catalogue and violence.* Though this comparison falls short, especially if one sees the art institution simply as an amalgamation of objects, not within the narrative of any original violence. Though this is quite a dangerous presumption because *it mimics the same misconception that the ledger was not imbued with meaning by the slave captain who wrote it*. So to look deeper into the art collection or the art museum, is to investigate the possibility of a multitude of varying experiences which were previously hidden in every catalogue or brochure. Just like the ledger, the history book, the manuscript, and other traditional archival sources, one has to observe in between the canonized art collection to find an iteration of what's underneath. *By breaking down the museum collection by what is hidden, instead of believing its validity as a primary source, we will imbue stories with meaning and start to retroactively engage in the act of remembering.*

We will start with the origin of the museum and identify its place as another object for contacting the archive. The Wunderkammer was one of the first iterations of the current museum: characterized as a room of wondrous things both natural and artificial; a chamber of objects noteworthy for their beauty or rarity, or their artistic, scholarly, or monetary value [25]. This first iteration of the museum was an important step for the eventual modern archive: *it was an initial list of essential objects seen as a collection*. Prior to the founding of the modern museum- which organized it content using given display and storage structures, the Wunderkammer scatterly displayed a collection of varying objects from around the world. In fact, many Wunderkammer objects were used as the starting point for future permanent collections of world famous institutions such as the Ashmolean Museum and British Museum in England. It is important to note that the intention of the "cabinet of curiosity" was not solely as a repository for objects, but as a declaration with strong political implications. *These objects were often 'discovered' as trophies of the foreign world; they came to be symbolic of things unknown, as unaccustomed knowledge of the outside* [26]. In this regard, everything outside of Europe was knowledge unknown and foreign to the 17th and 18th century world. These were collections seen as odd or unrecognizable to the European standard, but at the same time relished for their foreign aura as objects coming from the outside world. So in turn, the founder of the Wunderkammer possessed a partial holding of the knowledge of the world. This access to the unfamiliar forged power because it proved that the individual was not only well travelled, but that they owned an insight into a world another person did not. *Perhaps this was less about the objects themselves, and more about the implication of owning the world. The objects were merely the proof of*

this, and more important than the object one possessed was the insight that the other did not. The proof that one possessed a small fraction of the world proved to be a distinct characteristic of the Wunderkammer. As Robert Rumley suggests: “The ruler was allegorized in terms of intellectual power conceded as art. I am the ruler because I alone have the power needed to create a historical narrative emploring precious objects” [27]. The 16th and 17th century owners of these rooms were prominent people such as Hans Sloane- whose catalogue of 71,000 items created the collection of the British Museum. *These early collections were political tools to depict a control over places and objects previously unknown; to embody power simply by the act of having access and ownership to the world of unfamiliar objects.*

This transition from the Wunderkammer to the formal museum further exemplified its basis in territory and power. The early museum quickly became a showroom of unfamiliar and foreign objects in order to partially contact the unknown world. *Within this grasping of the unfamiliar, an equally tactile quality of the sensorial was applied to experience objects.* The early museum goer engaged in an intimate interaction with any object, where one had the ability to contact collections based off of the senses; this included the effects of touch and smell, taste and sight, “sonorousness or dullness. Smell or Taste. Heat, or cold...Gravity, or Levity. Coarseness, or Fineness. Fastness, or Looseness. Stiffness, or Pliableness. Roughness, or Brittleness. Claminess, or Slipperiness.” [28]. An early museum gooer was able to maneuver the collection by touching the objects and lifting them to determine its weight and material. Through this complex and sensorial experience, a special kind of viewing came about- one of tactile sensuousness. *When a museum gooer had the opportunity to touch an object, they also possessed the ability to connect to ones internal and the external world in a distinct way*. As David Howes states in “Museum Manners” which tracts the way viewers interacted with museum from the 17th to 18th century, “A visual impression of the smoothness of a sculpture, for example, could be complimented by a tactile impression of its smoothness. Smaller objects might be handled in order to enable them to be better seen- turned around or held up to the light. When visiting Hans Sloane’s collection in London Von Uffenbach describes holding a shell up to the light so that he could see “”the concham lying concealed within it”” [29]

A deeper quality is seen through the tactile relationship with a museum object in comparison to our modernized ocular relationship. This physical interaction gave the museum gooer an opportunity to concretely witness qualities *unfamiliar or hidden- it was the first institutional move to characterize the hidden nature of objects.* One was able to see the smooth marble, while feeling its surface and the mark of the artists hand in the material. This extends to the practice of early museums exhibiting artifacts as living objects to experience, as a 16th century mandolin being played for guests. When museum attendees heard the mandolin they reported an experience of experiential time travel to the time and place it was shown. This sensorial experience detailed material and weight, texture and sight, but more importantly it indicated an origin and past narrative. The sensorial museum parallels the structure of the alternative archive, where it is necessary to track a multitude of narratives for observing and restructuring the catalogue. *Ultimately*

this is the second essential quality of the museum: to mark a concrete archive by the accumulation of objects, and by its ability to concretely look back. When one is discussing museology as a foundational source for the archive, it is essential to note this particular ability. The viewer begins to reorder the art archive and is able to come in contact with the world in which it was a originally part of. This direct contact with a collection is an important starting point if we are to investigate the implication of an object's history and origin. *It is not enough to suppose our present art collection will suffice, we must engage and question different narratives if we hope to understand the conditions that make up any catalogue. Additionally, one must equally investigate what the development of this catalogue indicates about the archive itself?* As a result of the Wunderkammer preceding and ultimately becoming some of the most recognized cultural institutions in the world, (i.e. the british museum, Ashmolean Museum) one must break down what these original collections implicated politically and historically, for then we can forge a narrative of the hidden and accounted for within the museum collection.

The museum collection carries concrete, political statements; one could say that every museum object carries a collection of accumulated experiences. Before the 1900's formal museum procedures such as *acquisition* and *provenance* were rarely used- meaning many museum objects did not have legal or official documents tracking their sale from one owner to another. This meant that the objects themselves did not carry formal papers of origin, but they do carry *a document of their past and present movement.* Precisely alike to the question of the archive, one must ask where these objects originated from and what is our goal to contact this fragmented and this diasporic past? *This is not just the historical context of a given work, it is the story of the hidden: to read in between the mainstream art collection is to discover the quieted history of an object underneath.* The museum collection by its very history and nature is an accessible point to contact the unseen. When these objects entered the collection, it was not only a story of their acquisition but the story of an object's life before and after the museum. *The museum object tracts a linear story of things bought, stolen, dealt, stored and archived, and because of this linear nature museum objects are not only vehicles to describe an event, but are subtle, quiet, dangerous, strings of unseen stories which can only be illuminated within the mainstream collection.* "We should not assume that objects and their meaning are frozen once they join a collection. The museum was not a static mausoleum but a dynamic mutable entity where specimens were added and preserved, discarded and destroyed" [30]

The museum object is not just a reminder of the past, but an essential hint into a dynamic narrative which parallels the conditions of the hidden archive. *The hidden archive and the museum object both contact the narrative of those forced to relinquished their ownership. Both catalogue the story of dislocation from an original source and track the story of where we currently are.* As a result, each museum collection carries serious historical and political implications. The acquisition of a cultural object by any institution is a political act- even when the object is a donation, gift, or accessioned legally by the museum. *The story of the museum object carries a quiet and complex history from the original story to the present story.* In our contemporary state, an institutions right of ownership is not self evident: any object owned by an institutional body must be questioned through the context of the historic and violent archive.

Part 3. Forging provenance and the act of repatriation

The founding of the 'Elgin Marbles' and the British perspective

As stated by part two of the text, it is essential to note an object's history and progression: under what circumstance was it made and where does it live now? How did the object arrive at its present collection and under what pretense? This acknowledgment is important if we are to go further into the political implication of an artifacts origin. There are examples of artifacts which are characterized by their forced movement and fragmented history. At the very least, understanding the political surrounding artifacts is essential for any historical context, but additionally this acknowledgment of the political and historical will illuminate the hidden memory of how these objects progressed and how they currently exist. If one could track the narrative from an object's original owner to its current one, then we have the ability to investigate the hidden progression of an object in an intimate and concrete way. In turn, we will use a specific object as the starting point to discuss the nature of artifacts, and to question original ownership as an indication of the historic archive.

The Parthenon is an object which carries concrete political significance solely on its narrative of ownership. Known as the Parthenon, the Acropolis, or sometimes as the Elgin Marbles, it is a piece of ancient Grecian architecture dedicated to the goddess Athena and planned in 447 B.C., though not completed until 432 B.C. Built by ancient Grecian architects Iktinos and Callikrates, as well as the famous sculptor Phidias, the temple was seen as the pinnacle of the Doric order and is still considered the most prized and honored building remaining of Ancient Greece [31]. One of the most famous sections of the Parthenon is its 524 foot frieze depicting the procession of the Panathenaic Games, also known as the Olympic Games. The intention of this long processional image was to honor the goddess Athena by recreating the scene of the celebration in vast relief. Presently, sections of the Parthenon are scattered across a vast number of institutions and countries. The largest section being housed in the British Museum in England, followed by the Acropolis Museum in Athens, then sporadically placed in different museums around the world such as the Louvre in Paris, and the museums of Vienna and Rome. *Our focus will be on the British and Grecian ownership of the Parthenon or "Elgin Marbles"; for these two nations own the largest sections of the frieze and also have the largest political, historical, national, cultural and economic stakes in the Parthenon's possession.*

The British Museum currently owns the largest section of the Parthenon, possessing 80 ft of the remaining 128 metres [32]. The story of how they ultimately owned such a significant portion of the frieze is not by accident. One must return to the long history of how the museum accessed the frieze in the first place: *to acknowledge this question of original ownership and subsequent forced displacement of ownership- and to see its cultural and historical implication.* This tale of acquisition is steeped in a fog of

legality and false right of possession. *It is the question of who currently has the right of ownership, who held the original right to possess an object, and who loses this right through the passing of time.* This particular story tracts the political and cultural implication of passing the Parthenon from one owner to another, as it follows Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin (also known as Lord Elgin)'s process of gaining access to the marbles, and their eventual acquisition from the Grecian state to Britain:

"Lord Elgin applied to the Ottoman government, the legal authority in Athens at the time, for a *firman* (licence and letter of instruction) to permit his activities on the Acropolis. This was granted in 1801, and was followed by the issue of a second *firman*in 1810, allowing the shipping of the remainder of his collection to England. 3.2 In 1816 a Select Committee of the House of Commons found that the collection had been legitimately acquired by Elgin as a private individual. After a debate in the House of Commons, funds were agreed and the collection was acquired for the British Museum, where it is held under the terms of the British Museum Act 1963" [33].

One could interpret this "proof of purchase" as a simple, legal, and clear deal- however, within the 19th century deal lives a complex question on legality and right to cultural property. John Henry Merryman states, according to the Grecian government Lord Elgin only asked to *sketch and take casts of the marbles and frieze for archival record*, *not to take the originals themselves.* Contradicting this statement however, British Museum sources claimed that the Ottoman sultan sent out a firman to Elgin allowing him to take away "...any pieces of stone with old inscriptions or figures thereon"*. This vital aspect of the transaction is quite ambiguous and there has been no definite answer to reveal the truth of what happened. It is important to note that during the time of the initial deal, the Parthenon did not belong to the Greeks, but to the Ottomans, who had been ruling Greece for nearly 200 years. This political situation helped Elgin take advantage of the Ottomans lower ranking officials by paying them off and circumventing any annoyances, resulting in him owning a large section of the relief of the Marbles. *We will investigate this initial deal as it is the only documentation one can use to interpret a legal right and the deeper right of repatriality.* The legal deal is important because it's still the base argument used by the British Museum today in the defense of the Marbles ownership. The validity of such a deal between Elgin and the Ottomans must be questioned- for it was not simply a deal between the original owners (the Greeks) and the British, but rather, between the British and the people who were in power at that time over the Grecian state [34]. *It was this first event between Lord Elgin and the Ottomans which was seen as a legal proof of purchase*. The second action, which didn't occur until later was the selling of the Marbles from Elgins personal collection to the British Government. Although the 1800 voyage claimed the Marbles for Elgin, (who was sent on behalf of the English Government) It was not until 1810, when Elgin was under serious financial debt that he found it necessary to sell parts of the Parthenon to the British Government as an option to avoid bankruptcy. As early as 1810 "... Elgin began formal negotiations with the British Government for the sale of the objects. Elgin had hoped to raise £73,600, but agreed to accept the value determined by a select committee of the House of Commons, which held the collection to be worth £35,000"[35]. Although Elgin himself determined the collection to be worth more than the government's assessment, he

nonetheless sold it as a result of his financial situation. The deal was finalized in 1816 and led to the British museum gaining property of the marbles and exhibiting them. *The 1816 acquisition became an essential object for the institution, becoming one of the foundational objects which made up the collection of the British Museum.* By 1832, the BM created a gallery used solely for exhibiting the Parthenon called the Elgin saloon. Since then, the Parthenon has been shown in a variety of spaces within the walls of the British Museum, but never leaving its original home since the objects accession. *Throughout the 19th and 20th century the Parthenon has become a symbol of the British Museum, cementing its worldwide "right of ownership" by the institution*.

The British Museum in London, England, and the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece are the two institutions who own the largest section of the frieze in the world. So any Information from the British or Acropolis Museum is worth investigating, for both institutions have past and current national positions surrounding the controversy. *The British Museum does not simply house the collection as if it were accessioned storage, but has used the object as one of the pillars of the museums collection.* Since the Parthenon's first installment in the British Museum in the early 1800's, it has been an extremely popular destination for tourists; with hundreds of thousands of museum goers coming to the BM in order to view the Marbles each year. The Greek artifact being housed in the British Museum has created a massive financial and recognitional incentive for the institution. The museum exemplifies this right of ownership not only in their yearly data webs which the British museum uses to gauge the popularity of their collection, (the Parthenon was seen by *140,000* Russian citizens in six weeks [36]) but additionally from the museum website; who in 2015 released a statement declaring they "have a legal and moral responsibility to preserve and maintain all the collections in their care, to treat them as inalienable and to make them accessible to world audiences". *From the British Museums perspective, it is their legal and moral responsibility to make the Parthenon accessible to the public- to ensure that as many visitors as possible are able to witness such an important work.*

While visiting the website of the British Museum, one encounters a long list of information pertaining to the Parthenon. This includes facts on the history of the Elgin Marbles, as well as information pertaining to the controversy surrounding them. The website acts as a visitor center for the Parthenon by providing all of the essential information to the common visitor. They are forthright in addressing the controversy and use this transparency as a way to put all questions out in the open. The British Museum has not been quiet in acknowledging that they presently own a politically charged object, upon viewing the museums website, one concludes that the institution is confident in their right of ownership- that the country itself is very proud to have them. The intention behind this website is twofold: in part it is a history lesson of the true story which occurred between Lord Elgin and the Ottomans- and the second intention, which justifies the reasons behind The Parthenon belonging to the British Museum today. Multiple lists are used to reiterate British ownership; from the British Museums legal status of ownership to "the Museum being committed to maintaining its long-standing status as a centre for Parthenon studies" [37]. Overall, the institution sees their ownership as an opportunity for as many people as possible to view

the marbles, leading to a new insight into a piece of cultural history and Grecian heritage. *But more importantly, the museum views Grecian repatriation as an attack on spreading the knowledge of the Parthenon to the world. The British museum contests that Greece does not have the facilities nor recognitional capacites to house this crucial cultural artifact.*

Grecian Attempt toward Repatriation and the British Committee for the Reunification of Parthenon Marbles

Since gaining its independence in 1821, there have been countless attempts for the Parthenon's return to Greece by the Grecian people. Though it wasn't until 1982-1983 that an official request was made by the Grecian Government towards repatriation. Led by the Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri, the government of Greece began a formal process toward the Parthenon's return from the British Government. In 1982 she headed the movement and became a figure to demonstrate the importance of historical objects being returned to Greece. As stated prior, this wasn't the first time that Greece as a state had demanded the Elgin Marbles since their inclusion in the British Museum, but 1982 marked an important turning point because it was the *first time a government ordinance stated that the Marbles were stolen by the British.* Her 1983 statement embodies the cultural importance of the Parthenon and why it is essential for the Marbles to be returned to their birth place [38]:

"This is our history, this is our soul....You must understand us.You must love us. We have fought with you in the second war. Give Them back and we will be proud of you. Give them back and they will be in good hands...they are the symbol and the blood and the soul of the Greek people....we have fought and died for the Parthenon and Acropolis....when we are born,they talk to us about all this great history that makes Greekness....This is the most beautiful, the most impressive, the most monumental building in all Europe and one of the seven miracles of the world." [39]

Founded in 2009, The Acropolis Museum owns the second largest section of the Parthenon in its collection. As a result of the 2009 Grecian financial crisis, the Grecian state has a huge stake in the museums success. The possibility of the Parthenon's return is essential for two reasons: the first is so cultural property belonging to Greece can be celebrated in the culture it was originally forged on- and the second: it would would mean new avenues for tourism in the country. *The founding of the museum came with the hope that new sources of revenue would be possible for the Grecian state.* Similar to the British Museum, the Acropolis Museum gives information pertaining to the Marbles- but unlike the BM there is no attempt to demonstrate justification of ownership on the site itself. The website simply tracks the current state of ownership, with no mention of Grecian efforts toward repatriation. It attempts to simply state facts, detailing "from the entire frieze that survives today, 50 meters are in the Acropolis Museum, 80 meters in the British Museum, one block in the Louvre, whilst other fragments are scattered in the museums of Palermo, the Vatican, Würzburg, Vienna, Munich and Copenhagen" [40]. The Acropolis Museum website solely catalogues the importance of the Grecian artifact, and not the importance of a return of important Grecian artifacts to Greece. However, the Grecian government and the people of Greece are well aware of the current political and national situation pertaining to the Parthenon- that it is indeed a heated topic currently ensuing. Since the Acropolis Museums founding in 2009, the areas of the frieze owned by the British Museum have been left intentionally bare, without reproducing missing

information of areas of the frieze itself. This is an action which signifies future hope for the institution, expecting the eventual return of the Parthenon to Greece [41]. It has not just been the AM who has taken a stance to combat this question of natural right, other organizations and institutions have as well. The British Committee for the Reunification of Parthenon Marbles is a British committee dedicated to the return of the Marbles to Greece. Attached is part of their mission statement and information on their founding:

"The inspiration came from Melina Mercouri's passionate appeal to help return the Parthenon Marbles to their rightful home in Athens, at the International Conference of Ministers of Culture in Mexico, August 1982...The Committee was then set up in 1983 under the chairmanship of Robert Browning, Emeritus Professor of Greek at the University of London, an eminent scholar and polymath, internationally renowned and universally respected". [42]

The organization is made up of prominent professors, historians, writers, and actors. The British collective demands for the repatriation of the marbles back to Greece by the British Government. One essential component of this organization is their attempt to enlisting prominent cultural figures such as Christopher Hitchens, Stephen Fry, and Tom Hanks, among many others. This attempt has made a great deal of progress in the last 10 years of the organizations history: from The British Museum ending any reference to The parthenon as the *'Elgin Marbles'*, to the whole of the Committees archives being inducted into Kings College, London, in the Department of Greek Studies. These small victories represent a slow change in the perspectives from British citizens who believe it is wrong to own the Grecian Artifact [43]. In 2008 the mori Poll showed that " 69% of those familiar with the marbles debate support return, as opposed to 19% who oppose it (50% of the 2,109 people asked had knowledge of the marbles debate)"[44]. The British vote showed that many citizens did not want the Marbles in the BM, or simply did not care whether the British institution owned them. For the organization and the Grecian state as a whole, these actions signify an engaged body of people who believe the marbles were wrongfully kept by the British. Of course, it is not simply a topic which has ambiguous implication, the Parthenon's return is a heated topic which plays out in contemporary politics. Recently the Parthenon has made a return as an essential debate worth discussing. In 2014 only 24% of British Citizens thought it was right to keep them within the British Museum and in 2018, with the possibility of Brexit becoming quite real, Theresa May, Prime Minister of England, attempted to convince the 23 members to leave the EU. The country of Greece, who is a part of the EU used this opportunity to gauge a possible return of the Parthenon to Athens in the Acropolis Museum [45]. Prime Minister May even met with Greecian Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexis Tsipras, on June 26th, 2018, to discuss a number of popular issues which affected the two countries. The two can be seen in a picture smiling at the camera with the caption: "Friendship between UK and Greece goes back centuries and is stronger today than it ever has been."[46]. When discussing the prospect of the return of the parthenon May refused to address the controversy and has not responded even after the initial meeting took place. Today there have been countless small victories won by the BCRPM and the Grecian Government in their attempt towards Grecian repatriation

of the Parthenon. However, without the full compliance of the British Museum and the British Government, it will be merely a hope for the *full return* of the Grecian artifact which represents thousands of years of Grecian cultural and national history.

The Elgin Marble Debate starts to investigate a history previously unacknowledged and silenced by the British Government. The Parthenon is not a stagnant object isolated to the mainstream archive, it is a symbol of Grecian national pride and culture. For the British Museum to house such a culturally significant work signifies the very real political indication of ownership and forced historical fragmentation. *Both the BM and the AM are not apolitical bodies who simply house artifacts, they are politically charged institutions who must take a side on how objects are passed down and owned. With every museum collection, one must examine this connection between origin and collection, history and provenance, and theft and acquisition, to illuminate the undercurrents of historical dislocation.* We are hoping to illuminate the story of the object before the museum, where one is creating an alternative-narrative which faces the object within its true origin and history.

The hope for future Repatriation:
The 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The British Museums ownership of the Parthenon is one basis for contacting the politically charged artifact; but let us not forget that the marbles are not the only artifact of great historical and political significance. If one were to acquire an artwork before 1900, the process of accession would be shaky at best, and non existent in many cases. For many early museum collections it would be impossible to track the provenance from one owner to the next. The process to track provenance was either unnecessary or acquisition records did not exist at the time. As a result, *within the history of early museum objects lives an unseen development of possession, false right, theft and laundering*. For example, the British museum, which is funded by the British Government, carries countless artifacts taken from all over the world. Over the years the British government has denied countless attempts of repatriation to ex-British colonized territories such as Nigeria: “Britain has resisted campaigns for the return of what it calls the Elgin Marbles along with treasures from other countries including Nigeria and Ethiopia, often citing legislation that bans its museums from permanently disposing of their collections”[47]. This action has hugely problematic indications for items of earlier ownership to be returned to the original people who possessed them. *Once again, documentation and legality is used as a right to own; but this is not simply a matter of legality, but of ones original right towards ownership and subsequent taking of ownership*. The 1990, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, signed by President George Bush, called for the return of previously taken cultural objects from Native American Tribes. Prior to this act, these objects had found their way into numerous cultural institutions, where they were presented as artifacts or art objects- as insights into ritual or a certain way of life. When the reality was that countless tribes used these objects practically in daily life or ceremonially. *This phenomena of presenting an artifact as an art object was not solely enacted by the British Museum but by a vast collection of institutions such as the Museum of Natural History, The National Museum of the American Indian, and the Smithsonian Institution.* The law especially noted the importance of artifacts for ceremonial and burial processes for Native American tribes:

> *“The 1990 law affects every museum and federal agency that owns "Native American human remains and associated funerary objects" as well as "unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony." It requires each museum and agency to compile an inventory of its holdings, identify them by tribal origin and notify existing tribes of objects that appear to come from that tribe's tradition”. “Under the law, museums must return all remains and artifacts to any tribe that requests them and that can prove a "cultural affiliation" with the tribe from which they came”* [48].

Since the inaction of NAGPRA, some progress has been made: pertinent objects were returned to their rightful owners and are now are used as they were originally meant to. “As of 2006, about the remains of about 32,000 individuals had been repatriated under NAGPRA, along with nearly 800,000 objects”[49]. This act is necessary because it acknowledges the truly historic value of an object, where one starts to consider its use before the institution forged its place as a piece of art. The return of these objects to its original owner is a concrete action to separate the institutions own need for an aesthetic or artistic gaze, and understand the ritualistic and symbolic practices of an object. It is creating an alternative which starts to unwind the presumption that the object is just to be viewed for its metaphoric-historic value. *Further, one can suppose that the museum as a cultural institution has an obligation to enact this process of repatriation. It is not enough for the institution to half willingly give up an object, they should be taking agency in this process of repatriation.* The origin and the fate of museum objects is not a apolitical one but is loaded with subtle and quiet indications of ownership, right, ritual, and belonging. This process of returning objects captures the sentimental ties that every museum object holds for the culture associated with its original ownership. Often it is not just a simple, beautiful, decorative vase to be adorned by the museum visitor, but an object of deep cultural and symbolic identity for the people who forged it. This idea is brilliantly shown by Ramon Riley, a White Mountain Apache leader who works on repatriation. He states *“Museums and other people think of this as science, something that is not real. They think of them as objects and images that are nothing but artwork...it causes pain to tribal members and our leaders. That is something that only we understand.”* [50]. (my italics)

The action of repatriation has little to do with ‘proof of purchase’, nor whether an institution has the facilities *capable* of taking care of a museum object, it has much more to do with the power of an object, and where an object ultimately belongs. With the matter of the Pantheon, The British Museum uses the idea that they have a right to ownership because they can care for the frieze for future generations, but the testimonies of Ramon Riley and Melina Mercouri contests that although the object has found its way into a major institutions collection, its place and power lies in its origin. *A multitude of narratives and symbolic associations are innately tied to the object which are suddenly cut off by its displacement.* This is why objects such as the Parthenon or many Native American burial objects must not only be acknowledged for their artistic and cultural value, but for their intrinsic, practical value. *To discuss the intricacies of an object's progression is to combat the long standing narrative of an object solely for its use as art object to gaze at. In this process, one begins to combat a narrative outlining the mainstream archive of artistic and historical value, and returns to a truer act of remembering. This enactment of remembering is one of the only ways one can gain an insight into an alternative archive. If we engage in the act of remembering; to truly see what transpired and to repair it, then we are making an attempt*

towards the future where this process of gutting and erasing one's history can be avoided and hopefully overcome.



Index of the Remembered and Forgotten
Offset Lithography, Screenprint, gouache and graphite on Canson Editions
30"x44"

Research

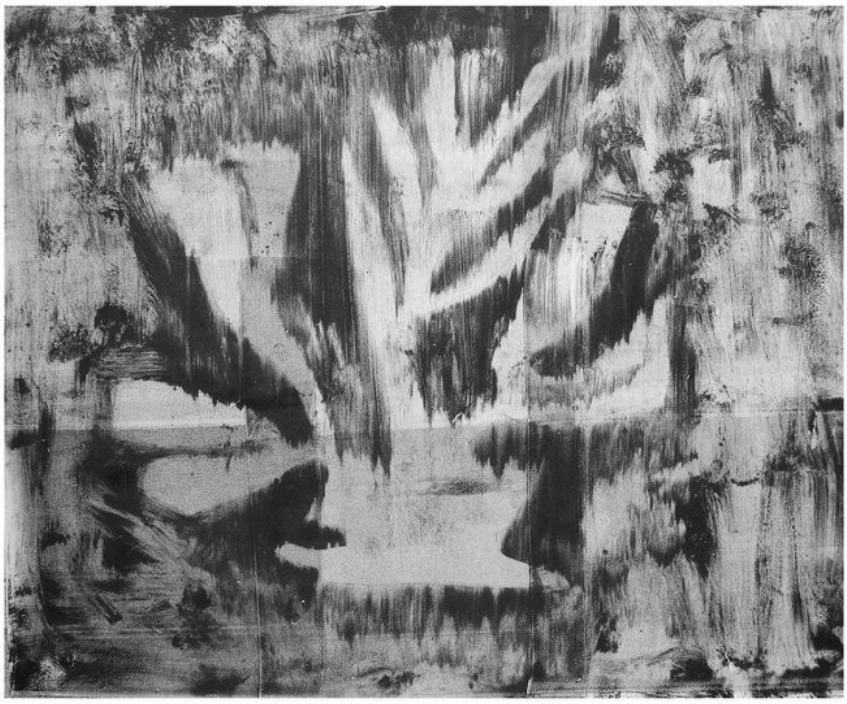
I have been confronting this question of the alternative archive for the past two years within my work. The initial six and a half months were committed to research, which was outlined further in the text. As stated previously, this research can be taken from poetry, history books, art collections, historical archives, diaries, ledgers, or any other source of looking back into a given event. It is essential I have a concrete archive to take from because it is the first intention to remember in a collective way. The process becomes less about myself and what I need, and much more about representing a larger idea which has historical associations and implications. I am not averse to using myself as an archival symbol in this process- one of course is able to recount their own history and use it which is important. Though after I initially started writing about the mainstream archive I realized *it provided a special opportunity to pear into a second narrative of history- intertwined with one's own narrative.* In no way does this first process of gathering information lead to the answer of the alternative archive, but it does lead to essential questions which I outlined above. I later discovered that it was difficult to understand any starting point for the archive, let alone create a structure for a new onew. The research at least provided a foundational guideline for my first investigation. I appreciate what the research afforded me: a starting place and the first seed of any real historical insight. At the beginning of this research I did not fully understand that

archival meaning could not come *until one gathered a large sum of information to use as its structure. So this initial stage was for the building of stories and narratives to eventually use.*

The second mode of research was my archive of poetry which I had been collecting for up to a year at this point. Over the period of months while accumulating poems, I did not realize that it would become the basis of this paper, nor that my work would go in the direction of the archive and historical institutions. I had always been reading poems and using them as a source of critical thinking and for enjoyment, but it was also poetry that sparked a starting point for my question of how to come to terms with any collective archive. This when I discovered the poems of Muriel Rukeyser and Seamus Heaney, which changed the way I went about thinking of a catalogue and art making. Both poets examine a particular system of reality: for Heaney it was the daily ritual of the woking Irish man, and for Rukeyser it is the reality of the working Jewish woman. With poetry I often accumulate a large amount of poems on a given topic, so these two poets came to represent the despised, the natural world, and the everyday archive. *These images came from the intention to depict charged objects which have an intimate relationship with the hidden archive* (see the natural world and the despised, pg 10). In these images I wanted to show the alternative archive as an attempt towards an honest retelling; to imagine the complex iterations of history, violence, and the possession of narrative. *With this story of the everyday object, I wanted to suggest a structure to discuss those narratives which have been tampered with, morphed or erased* .

Veiled Flowers
Collage, gouache on Japanese paper
25” x 30”

The poems mentioned above are intentionally not grandiose nor overbearing, but instead have a quiet, subtle, powerful strength, which parallels and documents the lives of the people they're about. This crucial action starts to concretely depict the exhaustion, excitement, vehemence, and joy situated within the everyday archive. I came to discover that in many ways Rukeyser's system of realty paralleled many others lives, including my own. It was also the first time any research I was conducting felt intimate; it didn't feel like a simple retelling or historic looking back, but was enacted as a primary experience. I began to understand the vital role of reestablishing an archive- whether it was through images or writing, there was great freedom in recontextualizing the mainstream story. After this discovery, I used the poems as the foundation to all of the images, and the images themselves always return back to the poems. *I now fully contextualize the status of the archive through poetry- it is the most direct, and yet the most expansive way to see into the depth of historical narrative and apply one's own story in its pages.*

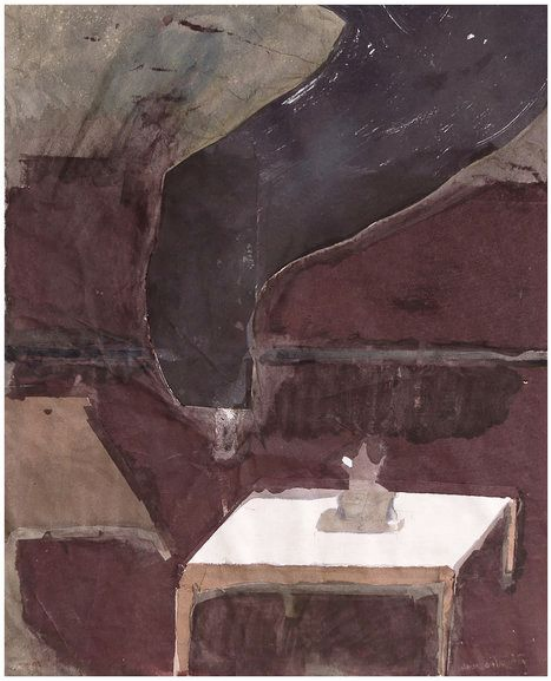


Untitled
Monotype and Graphite on Canson Editions
22''x 30''

Above is the second body of work which comprises of my last four months of research. At this time I was influenced by the symbols of flowers, burial arrangements, and veils. This research was taken directly from the The Language of Flowers, a concept conceived by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and brought to England in the 18th century, as well as Madame Charlotte de la Tour's 19th century book The

Language of Flowers. The Victorian Language of Flowers dives into the coded language used by English elite in the victorian era [51]. As a result of the modesty expected from the victorian upper class, a new language developed in which feelings, sentiments, and entire conversations could be tracked depending on the flower one used to convey them. Ones feeling of love, sadness, disappointment, and anxiety could be narrated through flower choice. Additionally, depending on the way one presented the flower: tilted up or down, kneeling or standing up, said a great deal about the way one felt about said feelings such as sadness or despair. Itt was not explicit as simply displaying an emotion, but rather, one could describe the subtle process of feeling many emotions in many iterations through the mechanism of the flower. This was one of the first books I used as a primary source for this question of remembering and forgetting- for the narrative of the mainstream archive versus the hidden one. It was my first clue into the power of symbols, which sparked my interest in the hidden and the historic. The historic was important because this all played into the research that would inevitably fuel this body of work. During this time I was specifically interested in flowers, burial arrangements, and veils, through the context of victorian English funerary rituals. *This was also essential as a foundational point to discuss something not initially seen, for objects to have a metaphorical and historic power which was unknown before. By reading historical accounts of people using the language to not only convey secret messages- which were inappropriate in daily life, but to inevitably use as a language for daily use fascinated me. I wanted to investigate why this became a major phenomena, and subsequently how it turned into an archaic and unnecessary language.*

Whether it be funeral symbols, fire, flowers, or the institution of the historic museum, I started to form an initial catalogue of information. *Every writer, philosopher, and artist used for this research created the content to peer into the archive in an essential and radical way.* From the poetry of Muriel Rukeyser, to the philosophy of Michel Serres who discusses the development of language through the context of noise and forgetting, to Gaston Bachelard who uses fire as a symbol for an experiential looking back, to Anselm Kiefer's diaries on collective memory- *all are undeniable sources to fuel this act of forming a visual archive- to create an alternative for the archive at stake.* I specifically enjoy accumulating stories from poetry because it leads to a new way of investigating and peering into narratives that were unconsidered and unaccounted for previously. *Through the accumulation of multiple stories, I began to discover the power of different narratives in the retelling of history. One must have the intention to not only believe in the history book and official sources of yesterday, but to attempt to gather a counter insight into the lives history has chosen to affect or erase forever.*



Holy Monument
Collage, graphite and gouache on Japanese paper
22"x30"

Collage and the reiteration of history

Although research continues to hold a place as an initial foundation for images, physical media such as Collage, Silkscreen Printing, Lithography, Monoprinting, Offset printing, and Drawing physically reinstate this act of remembering and forgetting. Collage carries very special insights solely by its material and transitory qualities; I later discovered that its originality lies in its ability to contextualize through a *material expansiveness*. Collage carries the ability to transform nature- to acknowledge its own image, and the its own history, even before one applies the pieces to a new image. This first attempt towards a 'fragmented history' intimately encounters the archive, which is uncommon with other forms of making. I began this process of collage by *cutting the many photos which made up a foundational, first catalogue: so along along with poetry, this fragmentation of documentation evidence created the structure of the image.* Collage gives one the possibility to bring together two sources which may or may not be compatible, to force interaction and provide the condition for new relationships to occur. *This conceptual ground is important for my work in collage, where one can connect strings of history simply by attaching them in new and strange ways. It was the first material I started to associate with a constant state of*

changing memory- whenever one puts two collage pieces together, they automatically relate to the history of each other and to a new image of remembering.

The process of investigating history through the qualities of a material is echoed through the tool of Printmaking. All of the images in this body of work impliment or conceptually involve the action of Printmaking. The printed image- whether it is made from Lithography, Etching, Monotype, or Silkscreen Printing, *all carry this reference to origin*. I often take an image from the archive which I previously printed and start to rearrange them on the page- this process always calls back to the double act of remembering and forgetting, fragmentation and information, and erasure and narrative. By doing this, one starts to engage in the process of remembering the history of an image- it does not simply exist as a reference to the past, or as a contemporary move in the present, but within this middle ground or referential becoming. *Collage is the most direct way to supercede time, to associate many different stories and narratives within the same depicted experience. This physical action of cutting and pasting establishes a present and past contact- it is where the material mimics the doubling and fragmentation of any archive. When one collages an image it is always with the acknowledgement of what content exists before cutting the image and what content is created by superimposing it to onto a new surface.* Printmaking speaks in the same language as this "double" and provides an opportunity to mirror the essential archive in all of its wonders, or to forge an expansive archive like the Wunderkammer (see the Wunderkammer and sensoriality pg 18). The printing process allows one to access previously forgotten objects and most important of all, to illuminate a new collection. Additionally, it is within the "mistakes" of the printing press which calls back to an essential origin. The mistakes which happen, whether it is overinking, scumming of ink, or improper printing, all references the tactility and historic tangibility of the objects being shown. *I prefer this 'cacophony' of printmaking because it is a way of referencing the mistakes in contacting history- that this process in itself is often impossible and always imperfect* (see Language pg 4). There is a moment where the machine itself is showing this history through its own qualities of imperfection- and it is an important quality if we are going to attempt to accurately depict the historic object as an image.

As stated in the text, the reforming of experience, or the hope to reiterate the historic archive, can only be accessed through the experiences which already exist (see the violent archive in its current state, pg 14). In other words, one must use the fragments of documentation to forge a new understanding of our present state. *Additionally, this is why I chose to collage with objects which question the narrative of our past: classical busts, monuments, trophies, and paper all carry the character of history itself.* In "Holy Monument" I show the bust in its its present state: within the museum collection. We are only able to view the bust from the bottom of the table, unable to move our position. The paint around the figure obscures and fades the bust, leading to a hazy view of this 'essential work'. *We are left seeing the object revered in a space specifically designed for it, while simeotaneously watching it degrade and become a part of the background.* Additionally, the background calls to another monument (much larger in size) which overshadows and overwhelms the smaller figure. This larger figure is reminiscent of the statue of Zeus in

Olympia, which was said to be over 45 feet tall [52]. It was one of the ancient wonders of the world but disappeared along with other ancient marvels such as the Library of Alexandria. We are looking at the legs of this monstrous figure which is meant to overpower the small, comparably modest, bust. The fact that we are only able to see the legs assumes that there's another part of the figure not shown to us. *But it is precisely this feeling which leads to a reminiscing of what is able to be witnessed, and what is unable to be seen.* We are unsure if the rest of the statue was broken off- like many classical marble statues, or if it's simply too large to keep within frame. Questions of this nature are essential because they start to unwind the process of remembering by the progression of narratives, histories, and archives. We can start to gauge the missing story of this monstrous monument, and it's inevitable downfall, through the image itself. Again we are left in a middle state- between seen and unseen, illuminated and shadowed, and the mainstream narrative and the silent one underneath.

Our Treasured Noise
Photo Lithograph

25"X40"

Documentation as the new archive

The third component of this work consists of artifactual documentation in the context of the museum. After the initial few months of researching symbols which make up the narrative of the hidden archive, I started implementing these ideas directly through my collages and prints. Suddenly plant forms, busts, museum cases, pedestals, monuments, flora, and grave reliefs, were repeating themselves in this new body of work. *I started to understand that behind these important historic symbols, was an equally important historic institution which housed them.* I wanted to achieve an insight into the full complexity of an institution such as a museum, through the objects they chose to collect. As time went on, my interest in the historic became more focused, coming to represent the way in which artifacts move and eventually change owners through institutions- how this dislocation affects the narrative of ownership. Whether it

takes form in the accession and deaccession histories of museums, or simply in the way museums go about displaying their work- all of these structures have influenced my understanding of how the museum functions as a historically liable institution. In the above image, “Our Treasured Noise”, I used the idea of the Wunderkammer (see the Wunderkammer & sensoriality pp 16) which was a 16-17th century amalgamation of objects, collected and preserved for their foreign origin [53]. It is important to note that these collections did not often center on theme- instead, it was a large and seemingly randomized collection of objects. I wanted to showcase each object individually to make note of their isolation within the “hall of wonders”. The central figure of the bust and the plant specimen are the main characters of the scene and are also isolated, as if they were being displayed in separate holding places. This very clear distinction between different objects and their individual space further exemplifies this categorical structurering of objects that would eventually create modern museum display.

Lastly, it is essential to note the process of *therotecal collage* within the context of the artifact. Before we were discussing the transformative and in-flux nature of *physical collage*, but this is an idea which implies a form of hypothetical change onto the archive. Although the objects in my work carry similar visual characteristics, they were never meant to be sharing the space equally. They were forced to share the same paper and by extension, the same history together. The forced action of placing objects in the same space creates the condition to look back; where associations start to have an intimate relationship between history and present, between what is shown and quietly implicated. The objects continue to exist in their own isolated state of objecthood, while being forced to interact in a way that they were not expected to before. *I consider this process an act of theoretical collage because the progression of how the object arrived is subtle and quiet- one has to intently investigate in order to illuminate their story.* We do not know the full history of how they arrived in the museum collection, but we do know that the object made a journey to arrive here. Through this above image, one must acknowledge that a diasporic condition forced these objects to change owners- that *each object, particular in its own way, catalogues the narrative of the unseen archive where one is not often able to track the starting and ending point of a given story.*

By actively observing the “theoretical collage” one is forming a new picture of what's at stake; one must decide to note the documentation of the past as a starting point for present work. *It is a grounding for an altogether new history which uses the past as a contributing source, but does not value it as the authoritative source for image making.* The hope of documentation and collage- in its most basic form is to supercede time and create an alternative image. The hidden qualities of documentation is a way of altering the mainstream image to create a new iteration of history. This necessary research, along with the qualities of process, finally offers an alternative to a mainstream retelling of events. *Hopefully one day, this new narrative will go one step further and create a radical new story- one which isn’t limited by its own mainstream history and expectation, but a story which is able to live alongside the catalogue of the past.*

Growth from the Catalpa
Offset Monotype and Screenprint on Stonehenge

30’’x 45’’

Still image from video ***Our Messenger***
Filmed and edited by Jake ceraso

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