Activating Archives: Towards An Embodiment of the Corporeal
Cara Davies, University of Bristol
Performing Documents:
modeling creative and curatorial engagements with performance and live art archives.

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/performing-docs

Remake looked at the ways artists use the historical archives of other artists to create new work. ... Redux considered how artist’s returning to their own archives might be a generative strategy. ... Replace investigates curatorial strategies that operate in the nexus of performance and documentation ... (Performing Documents Conference Pack, 2013: 5)
**Instability in Stability**

http://instability-in-stability.co.uk

**Performance Task**
Between June and September 2011, five days a week, for 12 weeks, the durational performance Instability in Stability was broadcast live from the dark and dusty depths of a loft in Bedfordshire.
It is clear some users of archival documents are quite fascinated by archival context: they want to understand the archival context and provenance because it gives historical accuracy and authenticity to the document they have found. But many are not fascinated by archival context at all: they are concerned only with the document itself, with the information it provides about their own family and with the meaning it gives to their own lives.


This shift, which incorporates the context of the user, marks a real development in the meaning of provenance and generates new questions about the popular context of the archival text and about the political and social legacy of the archives.

(Craven, 2008: 20-21)
‘Live Stream View of the Performance’ Instability in Stability (2011)

Image credit: Cara Davies ©CaraDavies
• How does the body affect the concept of the archive and what this means for the methodological approaches for artists-who self archive?

• How and what should we translate about the identity of our artwork, of ourselves, in to the archive?

• How is this knowledge potentially manipulated by audience members/archive users?

• To what degree is identity constructed by these parties or by the constructs that governs someone’s interaction with the archive?
Object-based Archive

The Instability in Stability Archive operates on a multifaceted organisational system, which reflects the philosophical structuring of the Chakra schema. Each collection of objects in the archive is grouped according to a Chakra colour, drawing upon each energy points’ connection to aspects of our daily lives and mental well-being.

The idea being that the archive’s structure inherently reflects and embodies what is essentially missing from a traditional archive - a living breathing thinking responding anatomical body of the person who created the documents, the person who assigned significance to the records, to the person who carried out the processes of acquisition, appraisal, conservation and cataloguing.

When we visit an archive we often do not gain an ‘active’ incite into the materials housed there with out the presence of another human being. Therefore by offering a contextual/conceptual structure of the body as archive (or archive as body) it is hoped the viewer to the project will gain more of an informed, creative and intuitive approach to understanding the ‘body’ of the archive.
**Provenance:** a present from my sister

**Personal Significance:** great entertainment

**Memories:** Amy brought it for me as a random gift - either a strange Valentine’s day or mother's day present or even Easter present. I know it was a special occasion but one where I shouldn’t receive a present.

Penguin tends to deflate slowly after blowing him up and I had hours of fun making him get fat then squishing him up again.

In the loft he kept disappearing and reappearing. He first made an appearance on: (date to be inserted)

**Curatorial Decisions:** *to note: how was the item activated in the loft performances and which box it was kept used in. Also note whether the item has been used for any subsequent performances and what methods of re-activation where employed.*

---

**Title:** Penguin

**Summary Description:** an inflatable paper penguin

**Tier:** Red

**Box:** Gifts Received

**Metadata:** dimensions = 10x15x15cm

material = paper

**Broadcast Data:** 12th August 2011

**Date Logged:** 24th March 2012

**Participants involved:** Sven Goyvaerts, Amy Davies

**Comments, their experiences/stories:** *to be noted from documentation

**Links to broadcast:** *unavailable due to lose of documentation