Feminist Net-work: Digitization and Performances of the Women's Art Library Slide Collection

Althea Greenan

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ABSTRACT

The Women’s Art Library (WAL) slide collection embodies a singular culturally important feminist achievement that began with artists collecting their slides of artwork to form a public resource in the 1970s. Today it is the historical core of the WAL, a heavily consulted resource in the Special Collections of the Library at Goldsmiths, University of London. However, 35mm slides have become a challenging material to use and as in other art archives, the slides are seen as less useful and potentially replaceable by a digital image collection. This practice-based research explored the production of digital records from slides in order to expand on how digitization can capture a wide range of data from the slide, its production, and labelling. Beginning with a digital photography project ‘walking’ through sections of the WAL slide collection, I reproduced slides experimentally through print, video and 3D objects to discover the performativity of the slides in different analogue and digital environments of public exchange. These diverse visualizations work with the whole slide object and draw attention to the artist-inscribed mount that frames the film transparency depicting artwork. The research thus reveals the important material of the artists’ slide collection that is excluded from the final images representing digitized slide collections created using standard scanning procedures. This methodology reactivates the artists’ slides from the stasis of archive to recall their primary function as distributable images and reconsiders how the slides currently represent the artists who made them. This follows a detailed review of how slide collections and cultural heritage materials are digitized to support international studio, critical and historical art scholarship and engage with digital network culture. Recovering the slide mount and the women artists’ inscriptions is shown to endow the WAL slide collection with a cultural importance that is independent of what the slides’ images represent. The artists’ slides collectively produce a distinct syntax that expresses the complexity and individuality of individual artists’ practices in the context of and transformed by the feminist project. The research reframes the legacy of the WAL slide collection from its images to its performativity, showing how the slides are communicative tools for women artists’ participation in a political project raising the visibility of all women’s art. This re-presents the WAL slide collection as a performative site of ongoing feminist intervention and participation in culture unbound by fixed standards of value set by the dominant canon, digital or otherwise.
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ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

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“Cited Slide Walks” contains ten different folders of compressed JPEGS made during 9 separate Slide Walks. The tenth folder contains digitally manipulated images of Slide Walk images that remove the representations of artwork.

“Videos” contains two folders and three MP4 files. The two folders are: “Presentation Recordings” and “Screencapture Videos”.

“Presentation Recordings” includes two MP4 video files:

“Per_Din_5”
29 April 2013
The Performance Dinner no.5 10 min 52 sec

“12hr_Althea_Greenan”
3 December 2016
12 Hour Action Group 21 min 3 sec

“Screencapture Videos” includes two WMV video files:

“SldWlk_JPEG_work” 4 min 53 sec
“MHTM_ScreenCapture_28-11-2014” 2 min 23 sec

The three MP4 video files are:

“Flipbk_Stepping” a video of Slide Walk images 5 seconds
“giphy” a GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) short animation of Slide Walk images 7 seconds
“Look_4_Women” an accelerated live action video recording 1 min 1 sec
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<td>African Asian Visual Artists Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADI</td>
<td>Association of Curators of Art and Design Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DiSC</td>
<td>Digitisation of Special Collections</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIF</td>
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<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Joint Information Systems Committee</td>
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PREFACE

This dissertation proceeds from a career working with the Women’s Art Library that began in 1989 as a volunteer and continues today as a curator. Until 2003 when the collection was gifted to the Library at Goldsmiths, University of London, my archive/library work underpinned a matrix of tasks supporting the Women’s Art Library as a publisher and arts organization. When Make, the Organization of Women’s Art was formally closed, I remained to oversee the collection’s singular transformation from being a public educational resource run by an internationally active feminist art organization. Today the Women’s Art Library is the most active collection in the Special Collections and Archives at Goldsmiths. This dissertation bears witness to how this transformative relocation signified a cultural as well as physical shift that risked dissociating the collection from its own socio-political history as a women artists’ feminist project. There is a key difference to how the collection is accessed today in its academic setting; it is kept in a climate-controlled stack room behind doors with a sign that reads: “Staff Only”. Much of my work is directed at opening those doors and developing the Women’s Art Library as a creative space inspiring new work produced at all levels of academic and artistic achievement, using its secured situation to support and develop the collection’s relationship with contemporary practice.

Working in an academic environment prompted me to question how the slide collection, especially, would be interpreted and valued in the future, considering how teaching slide collections have almost universally been disposed of. I not only wanted to safeguard the Women’s Art Library slide collection but also situate its critical importance in terms of the politics of art documentation. This was as a feminist project that undertook to educate and change the artworld of critics, curators and publishers and create a new context for women’s art practice as an activist rather than academic project. This dissertation explores how to highlight and keep this identity in view as we plan for the slide collection’s future visibility in the 21st century.
My curatorial work produced a new role in the staff structure of the Library at Goldsmiths, University of London and in 2017 my job title changed to Special Collections and Archives Curator. I developed this role by making the Women’s Art Library collection the focus of a programme of artists’ residencies, exhibitions and events often in collaboration with outside institutions. This work is founded on the ongoing facilitating, consultative and teaching work that I do as part of the everyday. My work with the Women’s Art Library suggests a template for future curatorial positions in Special Collections and Archives prioritizing the importance of connecting archives with contemporary creative practice as well as academic research. But there is a question that remains in preparing the care of the Women’s Art Library for future generations of curators: where will their sense of responsibility come from? Through this dissertation I have become acutely aware that my specialist work with the collection – including this doctoral research – is driven by the Women’s Art Library’s originating feminist vision as the Women Artists Slide Library that drew me as a volunteer in 1989.

This research realized my desire to position the slide collection as the collective achievement of the women artists who sent slides to the Women Artists Slide Library. I do this by asking the question: What does this slide collection represent besides artwork? This question is crucial and timely, because although these women’s art practices are vividly represented by the 35mm colour slides, I felt increasingly alone in knowing about them. I initiated my research in the slide collection using artistic practice, or rather a form of “applied” art practice to open new perspectives on how I can read the slide collection and experience what the artists’ slides represented besides their artwork. My “performances” with print-outs and altered objects were not conceived as artworks, but as ways of destabilizing the guarantee of resolution (factual, historical, evidential) associated with archives. If at times these objects suggest a sense of irreverence and intimacy, it should come as no surprise since this research follows nearly three decades of working with and getting to know the Women’s Art Library slide collection. What follows is the story of my research formulated in the certainty that this dissertation represents only a fraction of the many possible research narratives that the Women’s Art Library slides will provoke as a uniquely expressive and persuasive collection.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research project was inspired by women I met at the Women’s Art Library. The two who insisted that I should and would produce doctoral research are Catherine Grant and Tahani Nadim, who both made this kind of work look deceptively easy. Real support and faith also came from those I met along this research journey. Dr. Lara Perry whose patience, steady guidance and enthusiasm as my first supervisor I cannot be more grateful for. I also thank Professor Catherine Moriarty who provided key observations and critical encouragement throughout this process as my second supervisor. Nicola Cook provided technical advice as well as Jesse (mouser) who sorted out the film for the Flipbook. Felicity Allen and Ignaz Cassar were both essential readers striking the perfect balance between friendship and critical input. Special thanks to my colleagues past and present: Jacqueline Cooke, Elizabeth Williams, Bekky Randall, Andrew Gray, Lesley Ruthven and James Bulley (and Guy Atkins), Ozden Sahin and Jeremiah Spillane for being fellow travellers. I was also inspired by the individuals who make up the Association of Curators of Art and Design Images (ACADI) and the Visual Resources Association (VRA), with particular gratitude to Kathe Hicks Albrecht whose travel award enabled me to attend the VRA Annual conference in 2013. I am hugely grateful for many wonderful conversations with my artist friends: Amanda Peters, Caroline Smith, Diane Roberts and Natalie Papamichael. Artists and curators I have worked with and continue to be inspired by include: Rose Frain, Claire Gasson, Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, Anne Krinsky, Oriana Fox, Holly Pester, Lesley Kerman, Sophia Hao, Hannah O’Shea, Rita Keegan, Caroline Gausden, Karen DiFranco, Mo Throp and Maria Walsh to name just a few. Alexis Hunter’s tenacious and uncompromising feminist conviction underwrites this thesis along with my reading group of illustrious feminist art thinkers including Helena Reckitt, Hilary Robinson, Jo Stockham, Lucy Reynolds and Amy Tobin. Thanks are also due to my family, Gavin, Zoe and Sophia, as well as my parents Russell and Flora Greenan who provided me with their combined love for art and writing. I also dedicate this work to our late family friend and lifelong role model, Esther Maletz Stone. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the women artists whose slides I have been privileged to work with. They are too numerous to list here, but their names form a document in the Appendices of this thesis which I offer as a tribute to the Women’s Art Library and all those who have contributed to it.
DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed:

Date:
INTRODUCTION

The Women’s Art Library (WAL) is a feminist achievement and feelings of uncertainty about the future of its slide collection led to the undertaking of this research. The problem does not lie with the material’s safety and care, but with the assumptions that being a slide collection evokes about what the collection represents. Here is a collection of over 60,000 images of historical and contemporary women’s art on slides, but there is no critical discourse generated by this unique grouping. The collection has been open for public use since 1982 and the slides’ images have furnished material for alternative forms of distributed image collections, notably a microfiche set and CDROM published in the 1990s. These were produced by commercial suppliers to museums and publishers, taking care to reproduce the slides’ images, and no other material in collection that represented the artist or the slide collection. While ostensibly representing women artists from the WAL slide collection, such image collections are devoid of the means to recognize the slides’ cultural significance, especially in terms of the artists’ investment and the Women’s Art Library’s feminist work. Yet, these projects reproducing images in formats updated from the now redundant 35mm diapositive, were viewed as desirable because they are a means of distributing images that were designed to be distributed. The WAL slide collection and the artist were missing from this type of image reproduction that ultimately devalued what was achieved with the slides in the WAL collection.

This research engages directly with the artist slide files in the Contemporary Artists section of the WAL slide collection to discover what else the 35mm slide reproduces on behalf of the artist and the WAL’s mission to raise the visibility of women’s art practice. I began the research process by taking up a camera and moving into a series of performative interactions that recognized how slide images are integrated with their mounts, inscribed by the artists who made them. The challenge from this starting point was to understand what this overlooked material changed in the way the slide collection was valued and understood. This is a study that is rooted in the artist’s slide and the WAL as a collective vision. By returning to the material of the slide
collection, I am not aiming to produce a historical account of the WAL, but a different way of reading the collection.

The WAL slide collection offers a way to reconceive and broaden the cultural significance of women’s art practice. Marsha Meskimmon writes of the idea of “reconception” as the means through which the feminist art historian challenges the entrenched logic in her discipline that assumes: “the woman artist is a rare and derivative phenomenon, relevant only in relation to the masculine canon, held as a fixed standard of value.”¹ This research is an undertaking to reconceive the WAL slide collection at a critical point in the cultural evaluation of slide collections alongside a reappraisal of the collective feminist art projects of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.²

The WAL slide collection has not as yet been the subject of critical study. The need for such work gains urgency in my view because of the necessity to recognize the slide collection in the tradition of feminist intervention as well as archive. It was created to produce the kind of “dissonance”³ that Meskimmon identifies as resistance sustained through a polyvocality that challenges “the seamless narrative of the one with a strong and distinct oppositional voice.”⁴ This research considers how the slide collection produces a visual and textual vocality through its unique material that still speaks to us today. It proposes an original contribution to knowledge by analysing the slide collection as a digital production, using a digital photographic practice that reveals overlooked ‘meaningful text’ in the WAL slide collection. This reconception

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³ Davies and Meskimmon, Breaking the Disciplines p.237
⁴ “If we think of critical practices as voices which have moved from contemplative reflection to active engagement, we are reminded of the important role which the term ‘dissonance’ played within feminist theories of difference throughout the 1990s. […] Strategically, dissonance disrupted the complacency fostered by an economy of the same, dispelling the seamless narrative of the one with a strong and distinct oppositional voice. ‘Dissonance’ defied reductive consonance, simplistic concord, agreement and contractual relations based upon the inherent stability and supremacy of the centre.” IBID, p.237
of the WAL slide collection presents the whole as a feminist project producing a unique non-hierarchical space in which to experience a convergence of women’s art practices.

The Slide Walks

This is a practice-based research project that is so closely tied to the WAL slide collection that I feel compelled to acknowledge the artists whose slides I have revisited through the photographic project, the Slide Walk. They inspire this project and encouraged me to design a research practice that produced new knowledge by deconstructing my official administrative role of maintaining orthodox practices of managing and valuing the WAL slide collection.

The research begins with a process that reveals the complex relationship between a woman artist’s work, her workplace and her slide file in the WAL slide collection. Artist and educationalist Felicity Allen coined the critical term “disoeuvre” to open discussion and recognize art work as a critically significant aspect of cultural output or artwork, especially for women.

[...] from a feminist perspective one might hope that a Disoeuvre might become the generic name for bodies of work – work that might be understood to include either or both process-based labour and products but, significantly, some work that is not (yet) habitually identified or visible as art.5

The methodology that I deployed is a feminist deconstruction of my role as the curator in the sense of caretaker of the WAL slide collection for which I have work-practices relating to retrieval, collection/expansion, preservation, circulation, meaning-making. These are practices focused on the visibility of women’s art as “everyday” actions that maintain a routine of facilitating others’ research in the WAL. Nonetheless the work I support and the work I aim to realize is towards socio-cultural

5 Felicity Allen, “Creating the Disoeuvre – Interpreting Feminist Interventions as an Expanded Artistic Practice in Negotiation with Art’s Institutions” (Ph.D., University of Middlesex, 2016), http://felicityallen.co.uk/sites/default/files/Creating%20the%20Disoeuvre%20%E2%80%93%20Interpreting%20feminist%20interventions%20as%20expanded%20artistic%20practice%20in%20negotiation%20with%20art's%20institutions.pdf.
change, so that to begin the work of revisiting the WAL slide collection, I turned to a performative research method inspired by walking as a means of gaining new knowledge. My use of walking is conceptual, not actual, and theorized as an interdisciplinary methodology practiced by social anthropologists rather than artists. I was not intending to make artwork from the WAL slide collection. I aimed to avoid identifying myself as an artist since my art practice – primarily drawing – has become private and intermittent since I became a contracted employee of the WAL in 1990.

In retrospect, I concede that this research has become part of my Disoeuvre, meaning that it contributes to a body of work that identifies me as a woman artist as much as the archivist/librarian/curator of the WAL collection. This comes as a surprise to me, but reflects how the WAL produces an alternative discourse of art production.

Allen was a key figure in establishing the WASL from 1978-1983 with Pauline Barrie and others including Gillian Elinor who became a trustee in 1980. Her summary of the formative feminist critiques that defined projects like the Women Artists Slide Library includes a quote from Griselda Pollock that describes though it does not name, the role of the slide and the slide collection.

A key insight of second wave feminist art history was subsequently expressed by Griselda Pollock (1992/2001: 79-80): ‘the studio, the gallery, the exhibition catalogue are not separate, but form interdependent moments in the cultural circuit … [and] are overlapping sets within the signifying system which collectively constitutes the discourse of art.’ Combining a structuralist feminist analysis with discourse theory, the statement sits within art history responding to and producing unsettled definitions of the work of art, as well as art’s work.

I redefined my art work by making digital photographs of artists’ slide files. These slides are part of the WAL slide collection deposited in the WAL mostly during the 1980s and 1990s. My photographs are interventions rather than unadulterated reproductions. I am repurposing the slides through rendering them into digital objects.

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6 Ibid.p.57; Women Artists Slide Collective, “Present: Annie, Pauline, Sue, Flick, Debbie” October 1978, Early Feminist Movement in the UK papers, Slide Collective folder, The Women’s Art Library, Special Collections, Goldsmiths, University of London.
7 Allen, “Creating the Disoeuvre – Interpreting Feminist Interventions as an Expanded Artistic Practice in Negotiation with Art’s Institutions.” p.19
that function in ways that deliberately fail to reproduce how they were originally made to project. This methodology focuses on the material and performances of the 35mm slide to reveal dormant practices in the WAL slide collection.

The methodology is a process of recognition of how gestures and rematerializations conceptually move the archive and introduces an anarchic method of reproduction, reminiscent of Barbara T. Smith’s leasing a Xerox machine to install in her kitchen in the 1960s. She photocopied to merge her dual role of housewife and artist, “performing the tensions between public and private space, and paid and unpaid labour.” The research practice I developed is a feminist breakaway, corrupting or enhancing my authoritative role as curator of the WAL to become a photographer manquê, ignoring standards of digitization and reflecting on hidden, durational, low-skilled processes of image management. I mimic the artists’ and my own past experiences photographing my artwork, producing a methodology that leads to

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making alternative performances of the slide collection. By gaining a different material awareness of the slide’s properties, what becomes evident is the unacknowledged labour-intensive production that every slide evidences. My intervention is informed by my training as an artist\(^9\) and my curatorial experience working with artists and their practice-based research in the WAL. Just as important, this research is informed by a feminist cultural politics of visuality that remains a defining issue for women practitioners who continue to form support groups and collective ways of working towards gaining wider recognition for women practicing art.\(^10\) The WAL slide collection for me continues to raise this issue and my research explores how I experience this performative work – or net-work – of the WAL slides. This is very much a project about ways of perceiving what the collection continues to be “saying” in the context of today’s political situation for women.

The Contemporary Artists section of the WAL collection consists of slides produced by women who self-identified as artists and submitted slides to represent their practice in the WAL. The artist’s slide is primarily a photographic object consisting of a 35mm colour transparency film (or diapositive) mounted in a 2½ inch square (usually plastic) frame that enabled it to be handled and loaded into a slide projector.

I turned to photography to digitally record my exploration of the slide collection and question the prevalent digitization procedures applied to slide collections. I characterized these photographic sessions as walks that were a process of moving through the collection, starting by pulling a section of artist slide files from the storage space, placing them on a light table and rapidly photographing each slide.\(^11\) The Slide Walks were informed by the notion of walking as fieldwork in visual anthropology theorized by Tim Ingold who proposed movement as a means of knowing through joining "with things in the very processes of their formation and dissolution."\(^12\) Ingold’s approach offered a way of rethinking the problem of the slide collection as an assembled body of cultural material that appeared to have come to a

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\(^9\) I have an MFA in Painting awarded in 1983 from Massachusetts College of Art.
\(^10\) Groups such as South Asian Creative Collective (SAWCCY), ProCreate, South London Women Artists (SLWA), aconversationontobehad, and projects like Mother House are a few of the women artists groups I’m aware of in London as of 2017.
\(^11\) See Appendix 3 “How To Slide Walk”
\(^12\) Tim Ingold, *Redrawing Anthropology* (Ashgate, 2011).
standstill despite being designed for circulation and being seen. The research combined movement and photography to reactivate the slides’ capacity to bring women’s artwork into view. The digital photograph recalls the slide from the stasis of archive to resume its primary function as a distributable image as a first step in examining the transition of a slide collection into a digital form.

The Slide Walk is a performative research method akin to anthropologist Sarah Pink’s "visual walking",13 a term which describes her use of video as a way of not just recording but understanding shared knowledge.

It makes clear that knowing can only be as certain as the memories, perceptions and imaginations that are produced as I walk […] holding my camera.14

The Slide Walks were devised as a method of digitization that recognized the impracticality of mass digitization, to explore the desire for the slide to perform in digitized environments.

What is the Women’s Art Library slide collection?

The WAL had been gathering slides for over 5 years by the time Griselda Pollock’s *Vision and Difference* was published with the opening line: “Is adding women to art history the same as producing feminist art history?” Her answer sums up what makes the WAL important today:

Demanding that women be considered not only changes what is studied and what becomes relevant to investigate but it challenges the existing disciplines politically.15

It is important to recognize how the collection is defined by the political urgency to document women's art practice. The extent of the WAL’s slide collection shows the

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14 Ibid.
breadth of the response by women artists inspired by other feminist art consciousness-raising activities such as publishing, scholarship and teaching. Today the slide collection “resonates” in the sense that Meskimmon writes, by bringing together “different voices, reinforcing them at a synchronous moment without making them the same.”

The slide collection is a portal to diverse, unedited practices, often displaying no political awareness or interest and yet the slides are collectively acutely political in terms of asserting the visibility of women producing art. The urgency of the issue of visibility is conveyed by Carolyn Korsmeyer in *Gender and Aesthetics*, quoting Naomi Scheman’s “Thinking about Quality in Women's Visual Art”:

> Vision is the sense best adapted to express [...] dehumanization: it works at a distance and need not be reciprocal, it provides a great deal of easily categorized information, it enables the perceiver accurately to locate (pin down) the object, and it provides the gaze, a way of making the visual object aware that she is a visual object. Vision is political, as is visual art, whatever (else) it may be about.

To appreciate the collection it is essential that we discover what else the artist’s slide represents besides artwork, as the WAL slide collection presents a compelling opportunity to research how women artists sought recognition through producing and collecting slides.

Despite its importance, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt a thorough account of the Women's Art Library as an organization; the slide collection is just one aspect of this complex project. However, the trajectory of the organization’s formation and iterations is relevant to understanding how and what the slide collection represents of the original aims of the Women’s Art Library in its present setting in the Special Collections of Goldsmiths.

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The slide collection was started by a feminist artists' collective who began to meet in 1978 as the Women Artists Slide Collective, with the aim of creating a slide loan library. Over the next twenty-five years it became the most developed public collection of slides featuring the work of women artists in the UK. Significantly, the majority of these slides came directly from women who self-identified as artists, rather than copied from printed publications of women's art. The Slide Library was created to meet the needs of artists seeking recognition and anyone needing slides to teach about women's art. It was an early remit of the artists volunteering to build the Slide Library to photograph gallery exhibitions of women artists such as Susan Hiller in order to generate slides of women's art practice. The notion of creating a slide library emerged alongside other activities such as organizing conferences, exhibitions and seminars and demonstrates the essential role of the 35mm slide as the principal means of disseminating images of artwork until the advent of digital imaging. To collect slides was to consolidate visual evidence of practice.

The Women Artists Slide Library was constituted as an educational charity in 1985 and the title suggests how the slide collection not only consisted of women artists’ slides, but was produced by and for women artists. The slide library was however just one facet of women artists’ collective work at the time. An early document in a box of miscellaneous papers donated by Alexis Hunter is dated May 7th, 1973. On one side of the A4 sheet are the minutes of a meeting of the Artist's Union Women's Workshop convened by Tina Keane with seven other artists in attendance. In one sentence it was noted that they discussed the progress of the Women-House project (organized by Linda Price, Sonia Knox, Sue Madden and Alexis Hunter in a London council house for studio space and exhibition) and the children's community centre in Camden. The second point recorded that the group then looked at slides of

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18 Interview with Felicity Allen, April 21 2016, as part of Allen’s “Exchange Project”
21See Appendix Mary Kelly, Sonia Knox, Alexis Hunter, Anna Lena Lindberg, Jane Low, Sue Madden, Mary (Hannah) O'Shea
22 Tina Keane, “Artist Union - Women’s Workshop” May 7, 1973, Early Feminist Movement in the UK papers, AUWW folder, The Women’s Art Library, Special Collections, Goldsmiths, University of London.
historical women artists following up an earlier resolution to research women artists with an aim to “get ‘Old Mistresses’ shown at the Tate.” It is not clear who brought the slides, but it was noted that they considered "women artists of the past (i.e. 13 c to the 19 c) and talked out implications of their work from both a formal and feminist point of view." The locations of paintings on view in London by Artemisia Gentileschi and Angelika Kauffmann are also noted along with seven mixed references, including a documentary held in New York, one journal, four articles and a book published in 1905. The meeting concluded with the note that: "We will be continuing this study in the next workshop meeting. Mon. May 21st. at 8.30. p.m. at 91 Alderney St. S.W.1"

I dwell on this moment when slides are brought to a Women’s Workshop meeting to highlight how slides brought the work of feminist scholarship and intervention into the discursive space of practice. "Talking out implications" is not a typographical slip from "Talking about" and recalls (to me at least) how exhilarating artists found the discovery of historical women artists. They absorbed their stories of professional perseverance as well as creative output because it was vital to reconceive the context of their own artistic output through a women-only context of cultural productivity, and this was reinforced by bringing images into view and discussion.

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The beginnings of the WASL derive from a wide context of collective thinking from various iterations of women artists groups. The next document in this scant chronology is a typescript copy of an article that appeared in *Mama, women artists together*. It reads like a manifesto and describes the Women Artists Collective, a group that came out of the Artist Union Women's Workshop around 1977. This text

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25 Ibid.
is the first to describe a slide collection and it appears that this is the group, based in London and Birmingham, from which the mandate of the Women Artists Slide Library originates.

The underlying idea of the slide collection we propose to start is that it would give all interested women the possibility of seeing a range of work that is being done, not only within these broad approaches but within areas more traditionally thought of as women’s skills. We hope to use the slides as a basis for regular discussions, initially to see the extent to which common responses are emerging. Critical discussion of these various responses would provide us with a clearer understanding of their relative strengths and weaknesses and would, we hope. Develop into a more fully articulated critique. We think it is important at the moment, not only for women but for art in general, to try and develop a way of integrally involving criticisms and practice in a continuous dialogue. The full extent to which women’s movement methods and thinking may be relevant here has yet to be explored.26

Building on an established practice of holding slide shows to initiate discussion of art practices (for example see Alexis Hunter’s poster invitation to “an informal slide evening”27) the project that is described in this early document proposes a slide collection that would become a shared resource to enable the development of this consciousness by being able to see and appreciate the full range of existing artworks that already map or demonstrate progress in feminist theorising by visual artists. The importance of a slide collection was its capacity to make artwork visible to the community of practicing women artists who would identify the women's movement “as having only a very indirect bearing on their approach to the general problems of art,” but who might find in a collection representing a wide range of practices something akin to:

[...] a more abstract articulation of ideas to be found in women’s writings, which provide a more objective basis for the periodic need to take stock of what stage the movement has reached and what approaches have become outworn. Some of the art produced by women within the movement has fulfilled a similar externalising

function in attempting to express for other women the aspirations they share.\textsuperscript{28}

This early articulation suggests that the feminist project was taken forward by some artists more explicitly through their practice, but that feminism created a new context for all women’s art. Slides had a role to play in making this new context felt and visible. The Women Artists’ Collective declare in \textit{Mama} that a slide collection “would give all interested women the possibility of seeing a range of work that is being done” explaining that “we hope to use the slides as the basis for regular discussions, initially to see the extent to which common responses are emerging.”

The slide collection is described as a consciousness raising tool to assist sharing ideas and images with other women artists galvanizing a feminist strategy of support and education. The statement outlines the slide collection as the means to “develop a way of integrally involving criticism and practice in a continuous dialogue.” The role of the slide collection was to ensure that women’s art practice was empowered by dialogue and would inform future developments in art criticism and practice.

The WAL slide collection gathered evidence of women's art practice at a time when women were rarely represented by cultural institutions, and securing recognition through exhibition, print and taught curricula was the challenge that drew individuals into collectives such as the Women Arts Alliance and the Artist Union Women's Workshop. It was vital to the project of the slide library to be seen to be responding to this challenge through an ambitious programme of activities. This was reported in great detail in the first WASL Newsletter published following its official opening in May 1982. Events of the year – mostly organized by volunteers – included an exhibition of 'self-referential work" linked to the Women Live Festival to include talks and seminars and the creation of a collective with students to organize the “Women and Art Education" conference, running “fifteen workshops […] covering many areas from reclaiming art history to assertiveness training.”\textsuperscript{29} The slide

\textsuperscript{28} Women Artists’ Collective. IBID.

collection grew alongside an archive of documentation collected to consolidate this profile-raising work.  

In 1977 the Women Artists' Collective Project published an article describing their work and their proposal for a "slide collection" which expressed this sense of urgency and what artists needed from a slide collection. Firstly, a professional setting, e.g. a publicly accessible repository for their slides to represent their artwork alongside other practitioners. And secondly, easily disseminated visual material to introduce artwork into teaching, writing and curatorial projects in their work as teachers, writers and arts professionals.

By 1982 the Women Artists Slide Library (WASL) was set up in a small space in Battersea Arts Centre equipped with filing cabinets and space using portable light boxes. The artists’ membership scheme was established and slides were sent in from artists around the UK as the WASL was promoted at feminist events to become more widely known. Unique in the UK, the WASL’s contemporary artists slide section had collected slides from over 800 artists by 1990.

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31 Women Artists’ Collective, “Mama.”
Figure 3 WASL office using lightbox circa 1983

Figure 4 Entrance to WASL in Battersea Arts Centre, London circa 1983
A new space for the WASL and regular funding was secured by the principal coordinator, Pauline Barrie who oversaw the organization’s move to Fulham Palace under the auspices the Women’s Committee of the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Council in 1987. A significant development from the slide collection in this new space was the expansion of the research resource which came to include a growing print publication collection, posters, photographs and audio-visual material. The WASL was being managed as a national resource, affiliated with the National Organization of Women’s Organizations and becoming a founding member of the International Association of Women in the Arts with “links up with many archives

Figure 5 Nicole Veillard art historian working with WASL slides at Battersea Arts Centre circa 1983
and similar organisations from all over the world."\(^{32}\) The Women Artists Slide Library was renamed the Women’s Art Library in 1993 as part of a “strategic plan to rationalize the existing organization”\(^{33}\) with another name-change taking place in 2001 to Make, the organization of women’s art.\(^{34}\)

Today the WAL’s contemporary artist collection consists of approximately 46,400 slides made by women artists to represent their work. Artists were encouraged to label their slides carefully and list their details on the membership form they needed to send with them. This data was originally filed separately from the slides, acting more as a record of the donation and membership status. Personal details of artists were not kept with their slides as the slide files were stored in filing cabinets for open browsing.

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\(^{33}\) Ibid.

When the management of membership data became computerized in 1992, the emphasis changed from collecting slide details to a form that allowed an artist to describe her practice and an administrator to transcribe this information into the database. Using tick boxes and spaces for free text, practices were defined in terms of research interest, media and areas of expertise. This form continues to be used for artist submissions to date. This was in line with the way the WAL developed as an

Figure 7 Advertisement for WAL membership in Women’s Art Magazine, issue 57 March/April 1994

35 Artists’ Documentation Form http://www.gold.ac.uk/make/artistsdocs/
agency matching members with professional opportunities such as exhibition placements as well as publication.

Artists were encouraged to send statements, ephemera and press cuttings that were filed in a hanging pocket with the slides. Only mounted slides were accepted and each artist was designated a separate hanging 24 pocket slide file when they joined as members. If the artist updated her slide portfolio with additional slides she was allocated more files. In addition to the idea of the WAL as artists’ agency, the notion of creating an archive was important and guided the way slides were received and handled. Artists would either post or hand-deliver slides in plastic slide boxes or ring binder sheets. They were transferred into hanging slide files sourced from suppliers as archival storage material, then stored in metal filing cabinets in a room open to researching visitors along with papers and other materials. The initial £6 annual fee would have covered the cost of this storage. Until 1998 there was no signed copyright declaration for submitted slides and ownership of the slides was at times ambiguous. Some artists assumed they should maintain their slide files by replacing old slides with new ones.

The slides received from the membership were collected into one section regardless if they were sent by a paid-up member or one who had lapsed. This made up the “contemporary” section described as “one of the most vital and important areas of the Library” and significantly larger than the historical section that was being slowly built up through external projects. There was also the documentary section made up of installation shots of group shows.

The attempt to catalogue and develop a system of working with individual slides was never successful. There were early discussions regarding setting up the Slide Library as a lending collection for teaching, but in practice slides would more often be sent out for publication, and the slide library mostly operated as a reference collection.

The role of the WASL “documenting women’s art” (i.e. photographing women’s...

37 For example the project initiated with the Imperial War Museum WAL/AR/R/002
exhibitions) was combined with “promoting women’s art actively” on the part of the members. WASL supplied images to publishers such as The Women’s Press and could be seen to highlight members through high-profile projects like the Women Artists Diary. Even during the peak of slide-based teaching in the 1980s to early 1990s the WASL did not develop a slide lending scheme on a significant enough scale to suit potential borrowers. By the time Pauline Barrie, whose successful fundraising had secured her as the first paid staff and eventual director of the WASL, wrote her 1988 article “The Importance of the Slide”, it was clear that the WASL artist member should regard the slide as an opportunity for publication and quality self-promotion. She wrote:

But as with all currencies, slides create multi-tiered patterns of exchange […] their own economies, sociology, and etiquettes an entire culture based on little more than a fragile, 35mm integument of light-sensitive cellulose laminated in a reinforced paper square.

Slides were collected as routinely as curriculum vitae and artists statements. They were an essential part of the administration of careers in the visual arts; they were the "common coin" of the artworld, as Robert Storr put it. The artists starting the WAL slide collection turned the prosaic slide into a political tool, merging this self-promotional material with a feminist educational goal, thereby enabling their recognition and future citation. The 35mm slide was an effective technology through which women could participate in the WAL as a feminist project to proliferate information on women's art and bringing change to their cultural landscape.

The WAL slide collection was the first step in the formation of the largest public research resource dedicated to the work of women artists in the U.K., and the

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40 The National Art Slide Library (the largest free public slide loan facility for the arts) was based in the V&A until 1992 when it moved to De Montford University.
41 Barrie remained a key figure in the development of the Women’s Art Library until her resignation in 1996.
44 Ibid.
development of this resource continues as a special collection in Goldsmiths, University of London. However, while the 3000+ books, 10,200+ paper artist files, 150+ archive boxes, 100+ audio visual items, 990+ posters and 1500+ photographs have all gradually gained a digital entry of some kind that ensures its accessibility and future potential as citable reference, the rich and unique material of the slide collection remains off the digitized record.

The 35mm slide was a product of the practising artist, who invested time and funds to make sets of slides to use as ‘currency’ to participate in the wider art world. The WAL slide collection today consists of 31 linear metres of files, approximately 25 of which comprise the slides that artists sent over approximately a twenty-year period from 1982-2002. Women artists responded to the WASL's call to support “a national slide archive of Women Artists” with their own laboriously produced sets of slides. The wording that now describes the collection as “the archive […] known as The Women's Art Library (MAKE)” does not reflect the way the slides were originally an extension of living practices that sought to contribute to a “national slide archive” as a socially vital public resource for women. By the 1990s, however, the slide collection was being managed along with the books and other materials as part of the research resource and members were encouraged to leave older slides that illustrated the trajectory of their practice's development. The slide files had in many cases already become artists' archives as they were never disposed of, even when contact with individuals lapsed.

“The archive consists of:
1. Historical: Women artists from the past, slides and biographies.
3. Documentary: Slides and information from current exhibitions.”

The newsletter portrayed the slide collection as an “archive” contextualizing members’ files with slides and other forms of art documentation. This historical material was generated by art historians working with institutions, such as Nicole Veillard’s photographic project documenting women artists’ work in the Imperial

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War Museum (1989). Examples of extensive historical slide donation is the hundreds of slides documenting the Brixton Art Gallery’s Women’s Work exhibitions of the 1980s, members of the Five Women Artists Plus group, the Feministo exhibition at the ICA (1977) and Susan Schwalb’s donation of slides from the International Festival of Women Artists (1980). While it is beyond the remit of this research to consider these and other donations of slide sub-collections in detail, it is important to note the significant breadth of women’s art practice they also represent. These sub-collections provided the feminist cultural history unifying practitioners, historians, educators and cultural heritage administrators – often as women artists working in these roles as part of a fragmented career path.

Inspired by identity politics, the most active sub-collection to date is the Women of Colour Index (WOCI) with with a clear emphasis on practicing artists. It was developed by a dedicated staff member, the artist Rita Keegan from 1985-1991 and remains the single collection in the WAL to be developed in collaboration with a related project focused on identity politics, the African-Asian Visual Artists Archive (AAVAA). Paper documentation was collected in folders and organized by artists’ surnames in a discrete collection while the slide files were integrated and distinguished from the rest of the collection with a gold dot label on the hanging bar.

In a recent interview with the arts activist and archivist Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, Keegan reiterates the value of the project to the community of black cultural producers of how its art documentation was collected and where it was kept.

We all felt very strongly about documentation. Ultimately the only thing that is left is documentation and that was a perfect way to do it. We felt like that in terms of exhibitions and in terms of any kind of research we were doing that, it was so easy to get erased from history. You know, we’d seen it with the feminists; we’d seen it with so many other things. So the, understanding of how important documentation was key. Having the place at the Slide Library, where I could sort of

48 Extensive contributions were also coordinated by Katy Deepwell for example working with Sally Davis researching the Society of Women Artists. Deepwell also coordinated the e deposit of documentation from Lilian Holt and other material relating to her art historical research.

49 The Black Women Artists Index, later renamed as the Women of Colour Index, was coordinated by Rita Keegan, a Black-American artist living in London. The majority of individuals working at the WASL were artists, either practising or art-trained.

invent this Index and that it was always available for other people to see, for me it was quite important that it’s not someone’s private collection, that it is available.\(^{51}\)

The WOCI guided researchers directly to the paper files of black women artists collected together in a dedicated section of the collection, but situated the artwork within the main slide collection to prevent these artists' work from being segregated. The WOCI continues to act as a political space of cultural production and informs understanding of how the WAL and other identity archive projects in the arts connect practitioners with the educational environments responsible for cultural heritage and alternative histories. The WOCI's parallel emergence with the AAVAA and its re-emergence in 2015/2016 as evidenced in the publication produced by artists group X Marks the Spot\(^{52}\) as a discrete collection to be developed, highlights the relationship between the analogue, material political collection and a prospective digitised networked version. The AAVAA was the basis of two major digitization projects to enhance accessibility and secure its material in a national educational online resource. This important transition is considered as a case study in Chapter 1 as the research explores how digitization affects the politically motivated slide collection, including how the slides are valued. As early as 1984, the WASL artists’ slides were being endorsed as a picture resource library in a way that appeared to shift from educational purpose and feminist cultural intervention towards commercial licensing.

This typescript of an article appearing in the WASL Newsletter in 1984 reveals an editorial change by its author Araminta Morris that signals a shift in purpose for the artist's slide.

> We are now trying to increase the exposure given to women’s art by **lending** slides from the library for lectures and [sic] for publication, and we hope that this will be welcomed by members.\(^{53}\)

Crossing out "for lectures and" to read, "lending slides from the library for publication” lending to publishers is presented as something new for the members to

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\(^{52}\) Human Endeavour: a creative finding aid for the Women of Colour Index

consider, perhaps as an appeal to tolerate publishers' handling of slides which often involved separating film from mounts, marking them up and returning them in disarray. In any case this additional use of the slide is presented as a new incentive to join, rebranding the WASL as an “agency” working on behalf of the artist.

By the late 1980s, notices in the WASL Journal solicited artists to become members, submitting their slides in order “to be considered for inclusion in WASL’s annual Women Artists Diary and Exhibition.” The slide collection's remit “to educate the general public” had expanded the slide collection from being an educational resource to promote women’s art as a picture resource with an emphasis on publication as a service to the artist. An important vehicle for this work was the WASL periodical, which grew from the folded A3 sheet of the occasional newsletter first distributed in 1983 to a 20-page bi-monthly publication by April 1987. As the art historian and early supporter of the WASL, Gillian Elinor observed in 1989:

The Library is particularly valued for its supportive networking role, as a keeper of the record, a resource for women, as a lobby, and the Journal is, without exception, seen as a crucial instrument for all of those functions.

Nevertheless, artists’ slides were rarely showcased in the Library’s periodical and would be presented as from “the archive” rather than from the artist, as in the feature “Out of the Archive” slides from the Black Women Artists Index. Instead, the slides served to provide content for external projects such as the Women Artists Diaries, Muriel Magenta’s international women artists project The World's Women Online, a commercial Microfiche project and a commercial digital image CD-ROM project. These last examples drew on the slide collection as a stock picture source,

54 The Newsletter was renamed from issue number 13, October 1986 until issue number 36, September/October 1990 when it became Women’s Art Magazine
60 The CD-ROM did not gain sufficient financial backing to go into production although a sample CD-ROM was produced from artists’ slide files A-H.
rather than a showcase of artwork leading to studio visits and direct contact with the artist, show how technologies such as the online network, the mass-produced microfiche and the CD-ROM were reproducing the slide collection in the form of image databases, suggesting a practical, natural progression into a digitized surrogate form.

In May 2002, the London Arts Board announced that it would not be renewing its core-funding grant to Make, the organization of women in the arts, and the Arts Council also ceased funding for the organization’s magazine publication of Make, the magazine of women’s art. The end of funding presented the challenge of how to secure the WAL research resource of archives, posters, books, catalogues, periodicals, photographs, AV material, press cuttings, ephemera in addition to the slide collection. Staff worked with the Executive Committee (a board of volunteers) and key supporters in other institutions to identify a new home for the WAL collection. The last AGM of WAL members was held on 30 September, 2002, to dissolve the organization and vote to decide which of the final bids to accept from three institutes of higher education keen to house and develop the WAL collection. It was agreed to accept the bid from the Library at Goldsmiths, University of London to make the Women’s Art Library a major addition to their Special Collections. The collection was installed at Goldsmiths at the end of 2002 and the final Deed of Gift signed in 2004.

The Deed of Gift is the document that now governs the development of the Women's Art Library collection, as distinct from the Library's collection policy for other additions to the Special Collections. The phrasing that embodies and holds the original mission of the Women Artists Slide Library reads as follows:

6.2 The College shall use its reasonable endeavours to promote the archive in the furtherance of women's art, to maintain the archive as an accessible resource and to enhance the Archive subject to suitable funding being available.

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61 The financial report at the final AGM stated that the organization would have to generate “at least £150,000/annum to carry out the portfolio of activities MAKE had built up.” MAKE the organisation for women in the arts bulletin 22, oct/nov 2002
6.3 The College shall keep the Archive together as an identifiable collection.\textsuperscript{62}

The wording of the Deed of Gift, which was drafted with legal consultation by the Trustees of the WAL (then called MAKE) chaired by the architect Rosamund Diamond\textsuperscript{63} also included a provision to issue reference library cards to artist members identified by the WAL whose work is represented in the slide collection in order to maintain an involvement with women artists that continues to be fostered today. Despite this acknowledgement of a non-academic audience, the transfer of the collection to Goldsmiths signalled the reassignment of the slide collection as an archive to be promoted “in the furtherance of women's art.” This collection has come to not only represent artists, but also the historical organization of the Women Artists Slide Library registered in 1985 as an Educational Charity with the object "to promote the education of the general public in the work of women artists by the provision and maintenance of a Women Artists Slide Library."\textsuperscript{64}

This brief history of the Women’s Art Library from its inception as the Women Artists Slide Library to becoming the Women’s Art Library collection, provides the background to reconceiving the WAL slide collection in terms of a feminist identity project that remains as an image-based interface between artists and their potential audience.

**The WAL slide collection as a feminist project today**

Kate Eichhorn's writings on the archival turn of feminism\textsuperscript{65} suggests that feminism's reaction to the demise of feminist cultural institutions in the 1990s, which the WAL survived by a few years, was to make the archive “the primary apparatus through which we have continued to authorize new forms of feminist knowledge and cultural production at a time when prevailing political forces have often suggested that

\textsuperscript{62} Trustees of Make and Goldsmiths College, “Deed of Gift.”
\textsuperscript{63} The other members were Gill Addison, Nadine Alsina, Mariita Eager, Paul Henry, Mileva Novkovic, Claire Oboussier, Esther Sayers
\textsuperscript{64} Charity Commission, “Charities Act 1960 - Registration of Charities - Charity: Women Artists Slide Library - Place: Greater London.”
feminism is no longer relevant or necessary.\textsuperscript{66} Her account centres on repositories created to preserve feminist zines and their histories as distinct feminist cultural forms that warranted re-evaluation and safekeeping. The WAL slide collection appears to be at the vanguard of this ‘archival impulse’ having identified the value of aggregating feminist cultural production into a repository as its reason for being. The slide collection - more than the press cuttings and publication collections which preserved ephemeral writing and scholarly works - was established to mitigate against loss to current practice and validate the practices of the self-identified women artist. Even within the setting of the academic library and special collections today, the WAL slide collection claims an authority independent of academic validation, because it is a feminist cultural production asserting practices of visibility.

The connection with informing and sharing practice is how the WAL at Goldsmiths continues as a feminist project, engaging with women artists and curators through income generated by its publications, which is ring-fenced for bursaries that fund artists’ projects. Artists from outside the institution make use of the WAL collection and make work that is validated by it through presentations within and outside Goldsmiths through associate partners such as the Showroom, Whitechapel Gallery and South London Gallery. This programme is unique in Goldsmiths' Special Collections and ensures the WAL's cultural as well as educational usefulness and relevance to practitioners outside academia.\textsuperscript{67}

While there are other collections of women artists' slide files held in special collections, museums and institutions (mostly in the U.S.A.)\textsuperscript{68} the WAL slide collection represents a project of self-representation originally aimed at programming artists’ self-education towards a feminist visual literacy.\textsuperscript{69} The practice-based elements of this doctoral research engage with the slide collection to revisit this notion of self-education through the activity of taking photographs to produce new knowledge about the slide collection in the sense Kate Eichhorn identifies:

\textsuperscript{66} ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} For more detail on how the WAL collection continues as a feminist cultural intervention by supporting artists’ projects, see Althea Greenan in Feminisms and the Museum ed. Jenna C. Ashton, forthcoming September 2017.
\textsuperscript{68} There are multiple slide collections held at Rutgers University, New Jersey and the Research Centre at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC to name a few.
\textsuperscript{69} Women Artists’ Collective.
Rather than a destination for knowledges already produced or a place to recover histories and ideas placed under erasure, making archives is frequently where our knowledge production begins.\(^{70}\)

The archival turn of feminism Eichhorn describes includes an account of how Riot Grrrl zines transition from serving a dedicated feminist network readership into becoming an archive collection held in an institution and this ‘turn’ resonates with aspects of the transition of the WAL slide collection to Goldsmiths. This WAL slide collection has evolved into one of the sites “where our academic and activist feminist work converge” as Eichhorn describes and presents a unique opportunity to view how a woman artist contributes to feminist knowledge production through submitting slides.

Questioning the issue of access foregrounds the role of the library professionals who are responsible for the cataloguing and overall configuration of these unique feminist collections. As Eichhorn and archivist Jane Birkin\(^ {71}\) both observe the mediation of archivists and cataloguers impacts on our perception and reading of material collections in a way that is entirely unanticipated by the makers who created these objects and the discourses they contributed to. The WAL slide collection has become an archive in Goldsmiths’ Special Collections, ‘institutionally sanctioned’ yet challenging as a dormant resource. Despite being rarely used the WAL slides represent an ongoing refusal to fade or disappear, occupying 31 metres of shelving in the Special Collections storeroom hard-pressed for space and still accepting slides. As Eichhorn writes, ‘refusal’ also presents a potential, a future. Describing the BITCH manifesto in zine form, she suggests how the zine embodies the as yet unfulfilled desire for a “possible world. From start to finish, BITCH, like so many aspects of radical feminism, is a Utopian gesture.”\(^ {72}\) The WAL slide collection manifests how artists responded to the WASL promise of a women artists’ slide library, a radical


\(^{71}\) Jane Birkin, “Units of Description: Writing and Reading the ‘archived’ Photograph” (phd, University of Southampton, 2015), http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/377132/.

\(^{72}\) Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*. p58
feminist Utopian gesture that is now a historical artefact on the verge of becoming indecipherable due to technological change.

Despite the fact that artists are no longer producing slides, the WAL slide collection represents artists’ artwork. Now that the slide is a historical method of representation it becomes a new kind of artist material, which this research is bringing into view. The digital turn instigates a new reading of the slides to analyse how the artists conveyed their practices in the WAL slide collection and how the collection produces a collective feminist subject rather than an inchoate grouping of random women artists. Allan Sekula describes how the archive needs to be read knowingly and politically.

Neither the contents, nor the forms, nor the many receptions and interpretations of the archive of human achievements can be assumed to be innocent. [...] The archive has to be read from below, from a position of solidarity with those displaced, deformed, silenced or made invisible by the machineries of profit and progress.  

It is important to reinstate the WAL slide collection as a site for understanding the artists' slide as a politicised information communication technology, because the critique of digitization benefits from 'reading' the collection “from a position of solidarity” alongside the artists who represented themselves there. The feminist subject conjured by the mass of the collection is potentially unreadable, but its visible scale and physicality demands a re-examination of past and future accounts of art's practitioners in the way that Gregory Sholette suggests:

[...] when the excluded are made visible, when they demand visibility, it is always ultimately a matter of politics and a rethinking of history.  

Since 1990 I have worked with the WAL collection in an administrative and custodial role rather than a curatorial one. This service to the maintenance of the slide collection through routine tasks of database work, image duplication, correspondence

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with artists dominated my knowledge of the content of the collection and forms the basis of my understanding of it as a performative feminist project. Put another way, the WAL collection is the site of my practice to ensure a feminist presence in discourses that inform as well as reflect contemporary thinking around art. This practice is a continuation of my commitment to the mission of the WAL which distinguishes how I've developed my position as a Senior Library Assistant at Goldsmiths to include the role of curator.75

Nevertheless, my position within the academic institution has led to a shift in my relationship with the WAL collection, away from the responsibilities of overseeing its integration into the library's systems of management towards developing a programme of art and curatorial projects. My role in cataloguing and creating accessible records has largely been taken over by the institutional infrastructure, but as a curator seeking to introduce the WAL collection to new audiences, I experience the difficulty of approaching the slide collection as a comprehensible material collection. The obsolescence of the slide as an information communication technology is compounded by the success of attracting and preserving a vast number of slides without the capacity to search them effectively. To discover artwork by unknown women artists organized by their surnames remains a physical process of looking through the slides, despite the attempts to classify artists by genres and other terms they use to describe their practices for digitized cross-referencing. These descriptive terms do not do justice to the range and depth of the artworks and the question of future accessibility of this collection depends on 'reading' an overwhelming amount of material. This contrasts with my initial experience volunteering at the WAL when building up the slide collection was a main priority. This shift reflects what Thalia Gouma-Peterson described as early as 1987 as the difference between first and second generation feminist critiques of art history where the first artists sought “simple equity with male colleague” to find themselves, as she quotes Jacqueline Skiles, “[…] forced, by virtue of the barriers to those rewards, to alter the structure of that world by adding to it a parallel set of alternative institutions, publications, and organizations […]”76 The primary feminist subject of the slide

75 My job description finally changed in December 2017 to Curator of Special Collections and Archives.
collection is the self-documenting woman artist, and I am using this research to converge academic with the feminist work begun by the slide collection that represents not only a finite group of women artists but the multiple feminist practices of archivists, students, academics, and researchers that continue to sustain the collection.

Lucy Lippard uses of the term “over-the-top accumulation” to recall the drive of the 1970s engaged in the immediate task of making a case for change through a defiant inclusiveness. Conceived in the 1970s, the WAL slide collection is the result of the organization adhering to its original policy to include artists regardless of whether they had been validated by having exhibitions, in contrast with resources like the research centre at the National Museum of Women in the Arts gathering artist files since the late 1980s. This inclusiveness became problematic by the 1990s, when it was clear that the membership represented by the slide collection was not the constituency of women artists that the WAL's bi-monthly magazine could represent and still function as a credible internationally distributed critical arts publication.

The WAL slides resist easy assimilation into descriptive systems or digitization projects. Even if there were the resources to catalogue each artist slide file to item level and create detailed descriptive records for each slide, digitizing the slide collection itself to become a virtual object of study would require the laborious process of scanning slides three times to represent the slide in full including the mount. The additional challenge of artists' slides for a cataloguer is the inevitable shortfall of descriptive terms for artwork. When the slide collection 'appears' (not as yet in the library management system through a barcode location system but in the archives catalogue as a list), the only truly distinguishing features between records of slide files is the name of the artist. As Clare Gasson's work The River made palpable,

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79 The ‘Members News’ column was moved to the back of the publication in ... and finally discontinued in ... A Members Bulletin was set up to replace this lack of representation, distributed to members only featuring contributions from members, but never promoted to a wider readership.

80 This technique was described by Katherine Martinez (Centre for Creative Photography) in relation to the digitization of the Garry Winogrand slide collection to include the slide mounts.
a roll call of women artists’ names on such a scale is a powerful statement, but would a more critical approach to digitization create a different legacy from the WAL slide collection’s radical gesture of accumulation that acknowledges how such a “politically intentional anti-exclusive aesthetic” as Lippard pointed out […] “was also a core value of feminist art.”

**Digitization: a questionable visibility for the WAL slide collection**

The artist slide file is the only material in the WAL that has been trialled as a digitized object and set up in a networked environment. A small section of the slide files were digitized to provide content for a pilot web site titled Artworklife instigated by Rosamund Davies of the University of Greenwich in 2011. The process revealed how normative practices of digitization using slide scanners excised the slide mount and with it, important evidence of artist’s production and relationship to the slide collection. The new digital data generated by my research reveals the full materiality of the slide mount as a site of communication that also symbolises the issues of marginality that the slide collection addressed.

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Figure 8 Screen shot of “work” page of Artworklife as archived in Wayback machine, 12 May 2017

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81 Lippard, “Curating by Numbers.”
The Artworklife project also highlighted another aspect of digitization that undermined the artists' material even when files are digitised in their entirety. When artists took part in a focus group convened by Rosamund Davies to gain feedback on the resulting web site “artworklife.org.uk” (now archived in the Internet Archive[^83]), they expressed disappointment to find that the digital interface overshadowed the experience of the artwork and its documentation as the work of individual artists.[^84]

The aim to reproduce the serendipity of archive work, guided the project towards scanning everything held in an artist’s slide file, to produce collections of images of artworks and documents that could be searched or browsed through text databases. However in practice this merging of images and text meant that the design of the web site interfered with the artist’s sense of a coherent art practice.

RD [Rosamund Davies]: I am responding to 3 elements that constitute these files [...] as they appear in the Artworklife web site.
1- "Keep it historical", which invests this material with a sense of it being 'precious'. This is a web site about archives rather than an alternative place to showcase artwork.
2-"Losing containment" meaning that the point of the web site interface of Artworklife is that the files gain a fluidity, and a relationship with other artists' works can be explored.
3-"Artists creating own narrative" The Artworklife web site creates an environment in which to experience how artists oeuvre might yield recurring themes, narratives.

Clare Gasson: These are acts of interpretation. That resembles a personal blog. Ubuweb presents artists, work in a way that artists want.^[85]

Artworklife’s design prioritised finding images and linking them with keyword or tag connections, but the viewer was navigated away from the portfolio of the artist. Interestingly, the focus group expressed a frustration with the unscaleability of the project, how narrow its focus was despite the attempt to digitize slide files in their entirety. The digitization process had split image from text, in the case of the slides, where only the transparencies were imaged and the distinctive slide mount work was

[^85]: ibid.
transcribed into a database. It seemed too, that WAL slide collection had slipped out of sight.

Artworklife should feature the Womens Art Library. The WAL is utilitarian. Artworklife should be a separate site and there should be a link through to a WAL site to see what comes out of it. In other words, create a directory of the artists in WAL and use Artworklife as an interactive site that links through to the WAL site as repository.

List 13,000 names from which you can request what you want and digitise who you want. Artworklife works, not as an archive but as a narrative of WAL.

But RD reiterates, this is also a developed interface designed to work with the material. She "wanted narratives to emerge from the material."

Is it valid?
Yes. To animate WAL, tell the story by simply showing people what is in there.

The web site's construction - the web site as a construct - "means that Ros has huge input".
But the archive itself is too big, to be worked into this construct of Artworklife.  ^86

The Artworklife project was in this instance critiqued by its own subject, the woman artist, showing how the artist did not feel represented coherently by the networked space through which her digitized file could be accessed despite the best intentions of the academic researcher who wished to release this material from its analogue confines to generate new meanings and new audiences. The Artworklife project demonstrates the difficulty of equating digitization and web space with ensured visibility.

Digital technology was introduced to assist with the administration of the WAL organisation with funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1992 that supported the set-up of a computerised administration system with a dedicated member of staff,

^86 Ibid.
Beverley Morris. Adopting Cardbox software based on the format of the index card used by museums and libraries in the early 1990s, Morris designed databases to administer the membership and magazine subscribers, followed by an attempt to catalogue the WAL slides. She managed to create records of 1,400 out of approximately 15,600 individual slides, but the project was never completed. The templates organized the standard data written on slide mounts that date the artwork along with indicating medium and scale. However, these records predate the capacity to digitize slides’ images and the artwork description was limited to a few key words.

Despite this, Morris was inspired to conclude the project’s report with a vision of “endless” possibilities where future computerisation enables her to search all of the artists’ slide files database to locate images with particular characteristics in the same

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way she might search for artists living in a designated location.\textsuperscript{89} Looking forward to a technology that continues to elude administrators of the WAL’s slide collection, the ideal remains to be able to work through images as easily as text. The challenge for representing all women artists equally is conceived as technical, administrative, and reliant on those responsible for systemizing the collection. The feminist project successfully produced an artists’ slide collection representing over 2,000 individuals, but the material extent of nearly 50,000 slides begins to work against the visibility of the artist even as it builds a substantial depiction of women’s art practice. There is a gap in representation that arises from the space between systems and material, slides and digital material. The work of the administrator, as Jane Birkin notes in her research on how archivists describe photographs\textsuperscript{90} is a layer of active representation.

The WAL slide collection is a material in need of a technical process of digitized administration, but is also a material in search of a process that responds to the political longing for equal visibility. Thus far, the projects making sections of the WAL slide collection digitally accessible have focused on how the information is curated and distilled from the artists’ files in the form of separately digitized images and text. My research returns to the slide’s material to consider what the collection represents in terms of more than the artists’ individual practices. The slide material and the body of the collection challenge conventional digitization processes and the politics of visibility suggests what might be lost when the process of administration separates images from text. A digitizing process that complicates the way the slide material is digitized and tested is required to explore the collection as a system of representation.

Slide collections created for use in art education have been universally replaced by digitised image resources accompanied by digital presentation tools that are part of the shift towards technologically enhanced learning environments.\textsuperscript{91} At Goldsmiths,

\textsuperscript{89} Beverley Morris, “Progress of the Database at the Women Artists Slide Library” (Fulham Palace, London, UK: The Women Artists Slide Library, February 1993), box 12a,12b, The Women’s Art Library, Institutional Archives, Special Collections, Goldsmiths, University of London. “I can search the slide files for a particular image (or colour of an image!) and I can pick out artists who live in a particular area. The search possibilities are endless!”

\textsuperscript{90} Birkin, “Units of Description.”

the teaching slide collection was dismantled between 2012 and 2015, during which slides of women’s art were transferred to the WAL slide collection for their safekeeping and the additional value they brought to the collection rather than to facilitate their ongoing use for lectures. The university library did not immediately subscribe to an image database to replace the teaching slide collection, possibly because there was no dedicated Visual Resources Librarian at Goldsmiths\textsuperscript{92} to oversee the provision of image resources and during this interim it was not uncommon for librarians "to continue to try and source images from whatever legal sources we can and the staff and students will continue to use Google".\textsuperscript{93} The online availability of image collections through projects like VADS\textsuperscript{94} and the Google Art Project \textsuperscript{95} expanded rapidly but not enough to become as reliable a source of images as the non-profit initiative ArtStor\textsuperscript{96} which coordinates digitized image collections into a single pool to assist "the academic community use digital technologies to preserve the scholarly record and to advance research and teaching in sustainable ways."\textsuperscript{97} Artstor is one of four image e-resources\textsuperscript{98} ostensibly replacing the teaching slide collection at Goldsmiths, but there is effectively no image collection unique to the university that reflects the activities of scholarship and teaching the way the teaching slide collection did. Meanwhile the WAL slide collection – despite its location in Special Collections - raises the same questions as any other slide collection in an educational institution.

Will they be digitized? Will they be used as archival materials? Will they be used as historic records, or for research? Will they be used for teaching?\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{92} The management of the slide library was shared between several members of staff whose retirement signalled the end of expertise in making slides and managing their loans.
\textsuperscript{93} Gramstadt, “Changing Light: A Plethora of Digital Tools as Slides Gasp Their Last?”
What would a digital image resource reproduce of the WAL slide collection? It is a feminist cultural intervention that demonstrates the importance of artists’ documentation to their community and the viability of their practice. How would digitization preserve and convey that viability? The shift from analogue to digital documentation is a critical development for art practitioners as well as for scholars and custodians of research resources. Much of the concern for the demise of the teaching slide library focuses on the loss of knowledge about the pedagogical practices of teaching art\textsuperscript{100} whereas this research looks at the slide collection as a means of connecting past with current art practices through digitization. The question, will they be digitized? is therefore qualified by this research project to ask, how usefully/accurately/effectively/affectively \textit{can} they be digitized?

The WAL slide collection raises the question of digitization because there have already been instances of individual slides, files and sections of the slide collection undergoing a process of digitization. The question of how this collection performs in digital spaces of art practice and cultural knowledge making acknowledges the actions of digitization as cultural work undertaken in different situations. The digital work, whether it’s scanning the image, recording metadata on a database, or building both into a web site is a new articulation of the artist’s slide. What do these new articulations express of the artist’s slide and its positioning in a feminist collection that I propose as a collective project?

Material archives and collections are digitised routinely and out of necessity making critical research into this process urgent. This is especially true when thinking of photographic archives, as the Florence Declaration regarding the safeguarding of analogue collections testifies.\textsuperscript{101} This project situates the digitization process away from the hubris of cutting edge technology and large scale research and development projects such as those identified with "Digitising our culture."\textsuperscript{102} Instead it recognizes


\textsuperscript{101} Kunsthistorisches Insitut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut, “Florence Declaration: Recommendations for the Preservation of Analogue Photo Archives” (Kunsthistorisches Insitut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institute, October 31, 2009), http://www.khi.fi.it/pdf/florence_declaration_en.pdf.

the ongoing socio-political work around cultural heritage and participation that women artists perform, and focuses on the history and future of the WAL slide collection as a site of cultural production through digitization.

Are there modes of creating and presenting digitized material from the WAL slide collection that not only relates its political aims but its evident success? The large number of slides demonstrates the support it gained from a wide spectrum of women artists while paradoxically creating a collection that is too vast to browse in full. The collection's bulk presents a challenge to the kind of localised (rather than outsourced) digitization procedures available to a library, ranging from cataloguing to scanning. However more importantly this mass raises the question of how search and browse mechanisms, the way we make sense of big datasets, might serve what has become the “dark matter” of the WAL.

This is often the case with artists' collectives, groups, and collaborations whose communal self-embrace inevitably spotlights the general superfluity of artistic production and producers. But something has also happened in recent years to that far larger mass of inert dark matter. It is a change that dramatically alters the relationship between visible art and its shadowy other, between professional and amateur, the institution and the archive. Dark matter is getting brighter.103

The WAL slides not only represent artists but also a feminist art heritage project addressing the issue of women's cultural visibility. It is due to a shift in technology that today these slides exemplify another kind of precarious visibility thanks to their unprojectability. The question of digitization links the collection to the discourse shaping the use of special collections and archives, promoting enhanced accessibility and education.104 Since the WAL slide collection is now an archive housed by an institute of higher education it is subject to custodial practices, including digitization, that risk treating the slide collection like a teaching collection, focussing on the images as illustrations of artworks rather than the slides as complex artist productions.

103 Sholette, Dark Matter.
The research aims to discover whether there are alternative-to-standard approaches to digitization that might enhance its reading as a feminist political project in addition to being a repository of images. Conventions surrounding the digitization of cultural heritage collections emphasize the importance of accuracy to the material that ensures the digital is accorded value.

The digital master that is created should not be enhanced or altered. It should represent the original as closely as possible. […] Digitized materials should enjoy the same intellectual property copyright protection level as the original. Primary consideration should be accorded to accessibility and traceability of information. […]

This focus on digitizing the individual object promotes a notion of "interoperability" that enhances the digital object’s cultural value outside of its collection. The new version of the object attains as distinct an identity as possible through this best practice in digitization. This raises the question of how would the collective identity of the WAL slide collection be retained if the digitization of the slides concentrated on these aspects alone? It is important to consider how aspects of digitization situate and isolate the material in digital spaces in a way that is very different to their material situation.

There are now a wide range of examples of how slide collections have been digitized and made available for online research, shaping the context of art historical research that is coming to rely on digital material. Underlying every appearance of a slide in digital form is a process that separates the film image from the slide mount and renders the slide mount, at best, into a text, while making the mount itself disappear. The loss of the slide mount during standard practices of slide digitization removes the traces of the producers and collectors of the slides. As the slide mount introduces another site of information to work with, it emerges as an alternative to the image, equally as vital to the formation, function and cultural importance of the WAL slide collection.

I extend the notion of digitization to include imperfect digital photography organized like fieldnotes rather than archive files. This is a digitization procedure that disrupts rather than reproduces the standard digitization of library materials aiming to create digital images or surrogates with precision and care. I use photography and lightboxes to produce a digital version of a section of the slide collection that also produces an experience of the surplus of slides and women's art.

The performative aspect of the research does not extend to conceptually reframing the slide’s obsolescence as, for instance, a “work of memory” such as Corin Sworn does with a found slide collection. Instead, I am interested in how the WAL slides interact with the present in both digital and analogue form. Articulating the history of the WAL slide collection identifies it with a feminist past, but does not adequately reflect how the slides offer us women artists’ artworks in the present. The slide mounts are artists' productions that remain performative rather than fixed in historical moments, and I would argue that the WAL slide does not represent 'past' artworks any more than a book represents a 'past' novel. The slides are representing artists as an ongoing action that suggests digitization needs to be something more than producing another image database.

In order to capture and experiment with the projected character of the image, the research includes public presentations of the slide collection that use objects from the collection alongside projections to produce something of a virtualized experience of the collection. As I perform these experiments in clumsy digitization and hybrid performances of the WAL slides, I participate in a feminist revision of how we use historical slide collections and embark on image digitization. It is a feminist methodology that questions where the WAL slide collection’s authenticity lies, as a historical legacy or a performative entity? As the feminist theorist, Elisabeth Freeman eloquently puts it, “Imagine the future in terms of experiences that discourse has not yet caught up with, rather than as a legacy passed on between generations.”

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The political work of the WAL slide collection

The WAL slide collection is the result of a collection practice, initiated as a political action to establish a “sovereign space” for artists responding to the “politics of visuality.” Engaging new audiences for women's art, as well as engaging new women artists placed the slide collection at the centre of a feminist campaign that linked the artists into a collective response to the lack of visibility for women artists and created an “issue network.” To reconceive the act of slide collection as political work, the term “issue network” as used by sociologist Noortje Marres, provided a vital bridge between analogue material and digital community. Digitization and performances of the WAL slide collection reframed how the slide represents not just art practice but also participation in the civil society organization or activism of the WAL. Reconceiving the slide object as an information communication technology (ICT) associates the slide with electronic media and digitally networked environments and suggests that the WAL slide collection is an issue-based network of feminist collective action. How can digitization ensure/contain/this feminist practice?

Is there a way of conceiving the digitization of the slide collection that might “re-cast the historical as the ongoing, the contingent as the structural, and to see the archive as our contemporary”? This research aims to recognize the women artists in the slide collection as "co-conspirators in the early years of the second wave feminist movement to imagine another world." The challenge of digitization is making the WAL slide collection co-conspire with the digital iterations of its future.

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114 “How can a focus on process help us re-cast the historical as the ongoing, the contingent as the structural, and to see the archive as our contemporary?” CINENOVA abstract for Workshop 2 for Practising Feminisms 24/25 Jan 2014 , Goldsmiths, University of London
115 Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism.* "Here, in the 'future', may create the grounds for unanticipated alliances, collective enterprises, and collaborative projects that bring fellow travelers from different generations and even different times. In other words, for women born after 1970, reading something like "The Bitch Manifesto" in 2011 or 1992 or 2017 might do more than educate them about the past.
The feminist turn to as well as into the archive positions the WAL slide collection as a space enabling vital “unanticipated alliances”\(^\text{116}\) between the artists represented within the material syntax of the slide files. The slide mounts reveal how the collection’s information is structured by the artists engaged in the micropolitics of the everyday\(^\text{117}\) and feminist practices of naming.\(^\text{118}\)

**Considering digitized slide collections and online experience**

The research critiques habits of thinking about what cultural value conventional digitization adds to image collections and in the first chapter presents an overview of the projects that represent the shift that took place from 2000-2010 replacing slide collections with digital image resources throughout education institutions in the U.K. It is recognized that the material of photographic collections has been inadequately served by digitization,\(^\text{119}\) but the additional detail that this research brings by concentrating on the WAL’s artists' slides considers the implications of digitizing an entire collection.\(^\text{120}\) The aim was to discover whether digitized slide collections are distinctive from other digital image collections, and how the histories of their coming together as collections is evident in their online iterations. This extended my research beyond the digitization of slides to consider art collections and concepts such as the “Distributed Museum”\(^\text{121}\) being developed by institutions like the Tate to engage the networked community.\(^\text{122}\) Moving away from the simple presentation of image and

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Such moments also offer readers an opportunity to tap into some of the energy and rage that motivated Freeman and her coconspirators in the early years of the second wave feminist movement to imagine another world. This is precisely why The Bitch manifesto - the zine version, that is - is relevant to this discussion."

\(^\text{116}\) Ibid.


\(^\text{122}\) Ibid.
metadata also contributes to developing platforms for collaborative scholarship\textsuperscript{123} which reflect on the future of the WAL slide collection’s effectiveness in the environment of digital scholarship and how an artist's slide retains or gains purpose as a digital object.

Theoretical readings following a creative writing residential\textsuperscript{124} helped me to reframe the written information on the slide mounts as performative texts of situated writing. This enabled the research to focus beyond the 'text' of the slide collection archiving a small section of a 20-year period of art production by women.

Instead of endeavoring to rescue the 'said' from the 'saying', a performance paradigm struggles to recuperate the saying from the said, to put mobility, action, and agency back into play.\textsuperscript{125}

The research practice focused on how artists represented themselves by writing on the slide mounts this research revealed a performative aspect of slidemaking in the artists' inscriptions that I interpret as “site writing.”\textsuperscript{126} I adopt this insightful term from Jane Rendell through Kristen Kreider to express how the parallel accumulation of text alongside the images is more than meta-data or description. It introduces the polyvocality\textsuperscript{127} that distinguishes the WAL slides as a collection that included all women artists without defining what women's art is. And to produce the experience of the mass of artists' names with a political affect that creates “not an object of


recognition but of a fundamental encounter"¹²⁸ as Deleuze and Guattari observe. My research methodology tests the process of digitizing slides and finds the politicized voice of the collection. What else does a slide do besides represent artwork? It assists a strategy of “de-centering the canon”¹²⁹ and producing a feminist discourse that art history has “not yet caught up with.”¹³⁰

The Slide Walk is an exercise of “enhanced curation”¹³¹ recording the slide mounts adding a layer of digitally accessible information, rich in visual and textual detail, to create a new digital data set. The photographs are ephemeral digital performances of the slide collection or a new text of “the mutually disruptive energy of moments that are not yet past and yet are not entirely present either”?¹³² The research’s focus on the feminist agency of the slide collection produces a feminist research method to rediscover political ground in the slide collection.

As future scholarly editions of artists' catalogues raisonnés and other authoritative publications are increasingly digital-born, the production of art knowledge is well-established as “digital and managed across traditional disciplines of librarianship, scholarship, IT to become a multi-practice.”¹³³ This research is timely in its examination of how art knowledge is produced, using a feminist collection of unique art documentation to critique the relationship of analogue to digital collections and reinsert the woman artist into the ongoing production of knowledge. She is a self-identified cultural producer not only engaged in art practice but contributing to a wider critique of artists’ relationship to the archive.¹³⁴ The WAL artist submitted slides to a feminist project started by women artists and her submission is an institutional critique, while her slide represents an artist, an art practice and a

¹³⁰ Freeman, “Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations.”
¹³¹ Clement, Hagenmaier, and Knies, “Toward A Notion of the Archive of the Future.”
¹³² Freeman, “Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations.”
¹³³ Clement, Hagenmaier, and Knies, “Toward A Notion of the Archive of the Future.”
collection with a political agenda. The politics of visibility in the arts continues to be a relevant issue and this research project on the WAL slide collection signals new approaches to archives that engage with those politics.

CHAPTER ONE – The Slide Collection and the Digital Turn

The WAL slide collection remained a publicly accessible resource throughout the period that many slide collections were replaced by licenced image databases and networked services, a few years after Kodak ceased producing slide projectors in 2004. This is the backdrop to considering the WAL slide collection’s relationship to the networked environment, and how it might function in this evolving context. How might digitization restore and preserve the WAL slide collection’s socio-political and cultural meaning in the digital cultural landscape.

This chapter situates the original contribution to knowledge of the thesis in the wider field of literature on the digitization of special collections and the impact on art scholarship and cultural heritage strategies of engagement. I argue that the prevalent digitization procedures applied to slide collections tend to be conducted in a simplistic way, focusing on creating image databases from the slides’ transparencies. Directed by the question of how digitization reshapes a slide collection and changes the slide’s relationship to its collection, the research traces the institutional policy-making background to the demise of slide collections to consider the legacy of the digital turn. The review shifts from the educational to cultural heritage sector to include proceedings from symposia presenting current debates and evolving digital practices including the notion of the ‘distributed museum’ connecting with a network culture. This is followed by a return to the artist’s slide, where the research explores the relationship of digitization to artwork and the implications of reproduction. This survey of developments in the use of the digitized photographic object in education and its digital preservation in cultural as well as academic institutional repositories situates the research in the wider field to consider how the cultural legacy of the WAL slide collection might be conceived and managed. Both practical and theoretical aspects of the digital fall under headings

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“digitization” (in the sense of rendering analogue objects into an electronic format), “digital art history”, “digital culture” and “digital materiality” that suggest how the digitized slide relates to ‘the image collection’, ‘the data’, ‘the museum’ and ‘the archive.’

**Digitization: the rise of digital image collections in the U.K.**

The literature produced by the early initiatives in the educational cultural heritage sector to digitize slide collections capture the aspirations for the digitization of images in the arts in order to enhance the importance of images in education. Commercial digitization projects of photographic collections prompted discussions on the impact of mass digitization and cultural value, but the bulk of literature detailing the processes of digitization are reports generated by evidence-gathering projects such as The Digital Picture and DiSCmap (“Digitisation in Special Collections: mapping, assessment, prioritisation”). They sought to gauge the impact of digitization by identifying outstanding issues nearly a decade following the launch of a number of digitization programmes in the UK, marked by the setting up of the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) in 1995. This resulted in reports focusing on the use of digital images in UK Higher Education Institutes mostly commissioned by the advisory public body Jisc (formerly JISC, Joint Information Systems Committee) along with Research Information Network (2005-2011). These projects led to the establishment of data services that centralized digital sources for academia, the principal one for the Arts being VADS which began as one of many AHDS projects, but attained a critical mass of material and sustainability. A consultative project of Jisc: *The Digital Picture: A Future*

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3 “The Arts and Humanities Data Service | Tel: 020 7848 1988 | Email: Info@ahds.ac.uk - Enabling Digital Resources for the Arts and Humanities,” *Ahds Arts and Humanities Data Service*, accessed October 9, 2014, [http://www.ahds.ac.uk/](http://www.ahds.ac.uk/).
for Digital Images in UK Arts Education (2003)\textsuperscript{7} surveyed educational institutions to address issues of uptake and quality control from slide to digital image to facilitate the adoption of the digital image.

Figure 1 The Digital Picture web site splash page image including images of slides, camera, monitor, data projector and scanner

The survey posed 10 sets of questions to help identify problems presented by the shift to digitized images in the art education sector. One observation notes that librarians were “concerned that thousands of slides may disappear”\textsuperscript{8} which stemmed from the perception that the quality of a digital image was inferior to the “traditional slide.”

It may well be true that the level of affordable digital media has not attained a high enough quality for certain purposes but this may not be the case throughout the arts education sector. It is quite feasible for a lecturer to simply want an image … for illustrating a point in a presentation. To him/her, the depth of detail or precise colour balances may not be important, as long as the educational point is made.\textsuperscript{9}

The suggestion of compromise that positions the digital as a poor substitute has reversed


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
in a relatively short amount of time. The quality of most teaching slides that might survive in academic slide libraries in 2014 and made available will have deteriorated over time and cannot compete with the gigapixel quality of digital image collections as demonstrated by Google Art Project\textsuperscript{10} and the Metropolitan Museum of Art\textsuperscript{11} for example. The proliferation of collections of high resolution digital images might appear to overtake the teaching slide collection for image quality, and suggests how the value of the individual slide has shifted from being a high-quality image to becoming a unique document. The slide has become a photographic object that in turn needs to be digitized to a high standard to preserve its image, but also its cultural meaning. This research challenges the reduction of the slide to its image that standard digitization procedures impose on the process of integrating slide collections into online image resources.

The transformative innovation and irresistible proliferation of digitization initiated a reflective discourse on the end of the slide and the redundancy of the slide collection in professional publications, but the slide librarians whose practices were irreversibly changed by the digitization of image research and teaching, is less evident in the retrospective consultation studies. Interestingly, these professionals generated a lively peer to peer literature in professional publications such as the Art Libraries Societies Journal and the Visual Resources Association Bulletin\textsuperscript{12} culminating in the establishment


of the Slide and Transitional Media Special Interest Group to produce a *Guidelines for the Evaluation, Retention, and Deaccessioning of 35mm Slide Collections in Educational and Cultural Institutions.*\(^1^3\)

These include early warnings on the disappearance of the analogue collections, to detailed case studies demonstrating creative solutions to the problems of disposing as well as digitizing slide collections in house.\(^1^4\) VADS supported a research paper tracking the development of digital presentation tools in education in relation to the rich practices surrounding slide collections.\(^1^5\) Interviews with visual resources curators, library staff and academics within Higher Education Institutions reflect the ongoing critical discourse around the shift from analogue. Comments remark on the ‘‘‘too muchness’ of digital technology’’ and the idea that “[maybe] we need to pare back really to see things simply, slowly and more contemplatively.” Staff describe indications of a future value for the slides: “some of our students are becoming interested in the ‘hand-made’ object and there is a small backlash against the digital image and its use in art.”\(^1^6\) Articles appearing in a range of professional publications included personal accounts from individuals responsible for the building of slide collections and uniquely placed to highlight the distinctive qualities of the slide collection as a disappearing form.\(^1^7\) This literature is

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\(^1^6\) Ibid.

\(^1^7\) Jenny Godfrey, “Dodo Lame Duck or Phoenix? How Should We View the Slide Library?,” *Art Libraries Journal* 39, no. 2 (June 2014); Mark Braunstein, “Eulogy to a Slide Library,” *VRA Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (April 1, 2013), http://online.vraweb.org/vrab/vol39/iss3/6; Matt Davies, “A Licence to Scan: The Visual Resource
supplemented by the UK-based Association of Curators of Art and Design blog, which combines useful references and professional advice with documentation of eloquent displays exploring the practice and presence of slides in teaching. By the time I discovered the Association of Curators of Art and Design Images (ACADI) I had already begun to experiment with photographing the WAL slide collection in 2010, searching for an approach that combined looking with image-making and digitization to revive the material. The Slide Walks became a sustained series in 2012.


Figure 2  Experimental photograph of the WAL slide collection 26 May 2010, 07:57:44

Figure 3  Experimental photograph of the WAL slide collection 26 May 2010, 07:57:46
Figure 4 Early version of Slide Walk 26 May 2010, 07:57:50
Tributes to slide collections include the notable installation/exhibition created by slide librarian Susan Skingle in 2013 with materials from the Slide Library of London Metropolitan University.\(^{20}\)

![Image](https://example.com/skingle-2013.png)

**Figure 5** Susan Skingle, “Into Obscurity: Exhibiting the Slide Collection,” May 2013

This featured a light box and plexiglass cases of stacked index cards and slide wallets, while “Two veteran carousel projectors are angled to overlap the images from slides. The random superimpositions create light-collages on the walls of the exhibition space.”\(^{21}\) It reflected the experience of the 'Intermediary' by celebrating “the evident investment of time and labour” characterised by the “repetition” that builds any slide collection. Removed from the usual storage spaces of drawers and filing cabinets, it was a revelation of materiality to be experienced in a playful way before the bulk was disposed of permanently.


\(^{21}\) Ibid.
Figure 6 Susan Skingle, “Into Obscurity: Exhibiting the Slide Collection,” May 2013

Figure 7 Susan Skingle, “Into Obscurity: Exhibiting the Slide Collection,” May 2013
Apart from the occasion I presented the early stages of my research focusing on slide mounts at an ARLIS conference workshop in 2013\(^{22}\) there is little discussion in the art library community of how digitization might reinstate qualities of the analogue slide missing from current digitized collections. These themes were present in writings generated by curatorial art projects that focused on revisiting the 35mm slide with one major exhibition combining a historical view with contemporary practices in 2005.\(^{23}\) However, as artists tend to explore the slide as a medium rather than reflect on how the slide worked as an information communication technology, the documentation reflecting on artists’ use of the slide remains limited to occasional exhibitions of artworks.\(^{24}\)

An exception to this is the project SLIDE/TAPE which took a sustained look at the historical moment in the 1970s and 1980s when the 35mm slide was used as a visual medium combined with audio recordings to produce carefully synchronized audio-visual installations before digital technology. Led by the arts organization Vivid Project\(^{25}\) and developed in collaboration with Loughborough University, this project drew on extensive research to produce an exhibition featuring reconstructed seminal slide-tape works from the 1980s, using a combination of original analogue and digitized materials. There was also an artist residency working with personal slide collections sourced in the community\(^{26}\) and a day symposium. It succeeded in revisiting past practices in detail, including accounts from practitioners describing the unique qualities of working with slides as opposed to film or video. The curators emphasised the radical intention of the original installations, and how the format was deployed by artists engaging with


\(^{25}\) Baig-Clifford and White, “SLIDE/TAPE at Vivid Projects | Vivid Projects.”

audiences politically as well as aesthetically. However, while the digital featured in the SLIDE/TAPE project, it was the hidden subject of research which sought to revisit the historical use of slides without turning to the question of its archive or the implications of a digital future.

If the WAL were to resume its early mission to collect distributable images of women’s art work, the digital equivalent of its method today would resemble ‘crowdsourcing.’ The comparison with an internet-based technique of drawing resources such as information or documentation from an unknown public situates the WAL as uniquely successful image collection based on an open call to women artists. The WAL’s version of net-work laid a foundation for multiple networks to form connecting self-selected makers with self-selected users. However, the WAL slide collection’s value connecting artists to an unknown public – sourcing new audiences for their artwork – derived from the makers rather than the users until the technology became digitized. Does this reduce the socio-cultural value or relevance of the WAL slide collection? How did the major digitization initiatives setting out to ensure a future of abundant digital research resources define which analogue collections would be valuable for that future? How would they regard such an independent, unconstrained image collection like the WAL’s?

During the major educational digitization initiatives prompted by the Joint Information Systems Committee eLib programme “to transform the use and storage of knowledge in higher education institutions” (1995) and the Digitisation Programmes that started in 2004, the WAL slide collection was still positioned as an independent research resource within an arts organization. The reports assessing these initiatives would emphasise the user rather than the creator of the image collections that were being considered for digitization. But while the JISC Image Digitization Initiative (JIDI) sought to report and revealed the primarily educational focus of digitization projects, the “DiSCmap:

digitisation of special collections: mapping, assessment, prioritisation” report published in 2010\(^{30}\) established an overview of policy that consulted ‘Intermediaries’ (i.e. professionals responsible for visual resources) as well as ‘users’. It provides an insight into the ongoing digitization of special collections within the context of UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to produce “a user-driven digitization prioritisation framework of benefit in future decision making, both locally and nationally.”\(^{31}\) This is especially relevant as the WAL slide collection is now housed in the Special Collections of a UK Higher Educational institutional library.

The report examined the traditional' approach to programming special collections digitization projects, using evidence to advocate a system of prioritisation. It suggested that the ‘selection stage’ begin with a nominated “long list” in contrast to the prevailing method of prioritising in terms of supply and demand. The study synthesised previous studies looking at researchers' needs relating to digital resources on the premise that “despite being positioned as a priority, end users are generally not asked directly about which collections they need or would like to have made available digitally and why” but how this needed to change in recognition that “the sheer amount of material which could potentially be digitised and the limited nature of funding means that a more measured and targeted approach than has been taken in the past is necessary.”\(^{32}\) Understanding how institutions negotiate the task of ascertaining the possible cultural value of a collection to-be-digitized has an implication for those collections that may not be perceived as having a high user use and yet would make a significant cultural contribution to existing digital collection, if digitized. I would argue that the WAL slide collection counts as one these collections.

The report also highlights where digitization can shift a user’s research away from

\(^{30}\) “JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) (Funder), RIN (Research Information Network) (Funder)(2009) DISCmap: digitisation of special collections: mapping, assessment, prioritisation. Final project report.” http://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/14055/


\(^{32}\) Ibid.
collections’ material content to their digital functionality, leading to the expectation that digitization means that ‘hidden’ archives should be fully accessible online. Few collections would achieve this level of digitization, and it was recommended that web sites feature samples from special collections to demonstrate relevance to research topics so that “digitization effectively becomes a marketing and publicity tool.”

This report delineates a complex analysis suggesting the many stages involved in the transition of collections from analogue to digital. The DiSCmap report’s ‘long list’ cited 49 collections related to History of Art out of total of 945 and only one of these collections included slides, but these were lantern slides. Even within a broadened selection process, the 35mm slide collection was not viewed as an object for digitization unless it happened to be part of an archive of other materials.

Relatively few slide collections are found in special collections held by institutes of Higher Education, as they were primarily set up as teaching collections. However slide librarians would be involved in nominating or creating sub-collections for transfer to special collections of those slides that are not commercial duplicates or made from illustrated books, but rare unique objects. The detail of the DiSCmap report also suggests why the WAL slide collection was not digitized during this period of concentrated work building the UK research content for an increasingly digital arts and humanities field. “Need must be shown – backed by evidence – to be shared across representative groups of researchers before recommendations can be made.”

The WAL slide collection is not on the long list of even this ‘two-way’ consultative project. It is likely that the slide collection was identified as a thematic collection of art slides rather than a unique document of a historical feminist arts organization. The question of selection for

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid. Scotland: Glass lantern slides collection; Helena Mennie Shire.
35 Ibid.
36 “DiSC Map: Digitization of Special Collections: Mapping, Assessment, Prioritisation JISC Final Report: Appendices” (Centre for Digital Library Research, University of Strathclyde, Centre for Research in Library and Information Management (CERLIM), Manchester Metropolitan University, June 5, 2009), http://discmap.cdlr.strath.ac.uk.
digitization provides the research question of what else an artist’s slide represents besides artwork into the discourse of what Katrina Sluis refers to as the cultural politics of the object.\textsuperscript{37}

What conceptual change might digitization instigate that reconfigures the slide collection from a mode of reproduction into a cultural object/unit? The DiSCmap report lists criteria drawn from a consultation with over 1000 contributors representing the “End User” whose prime expectation is that collections are digitized to privilege research and the “Intermediary” who emphasises how digitization renders the collection more useful for teaching. This identification of two sets of user-defined expectations around digitization confirms the importance of viewing different interactive roles making meaning from such collections.

Intermediaries (with due professional care) were, for the most part, highly specific in their provision of descriptive detail on the collections, which they nominated as priority cases for digitisation. End users (understandably) had a tendency to be more vague, nominating, in places, discrete “sub-” or “super-collections” for digitisation. …

One significant conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that […] the digitised resource should not only enable end users to identify the context of a given object in the sense of the collection to which it physically belongs – it should also allow them to view its relationship to relevant “sub-collections” or “super-collections”, with the capacity to view related items or groupings.\textsuperscript{38}

Contemplating the digitization of the WAL slide collection as its future raises the question of where this digital creation would be positioned or networked. An information object like a slide is already a networked object and digitization should enable the


\textsuperscript{38} Birrell et al., “The DiSCmap Project.”
possibility of understanding this object as part of a cultural, historical, socio-political initiative. Just as slides are photographic objects with a unique materiality and unique ‘biographies’, slide collections also have defining characteristics that structure, preserve and convey knowledge produced in the studio and other workspaces to be recognized in an institutional setting.

The shrinking topography of slide collections was highlighted in 2014 in the UK as Jenny Godfrey and members of ACADI argued for the preservation of at least one analogue teaching slide collection as a matter of national necessity. Through digitization slide collections might usefully be related to each other, contextualized by the presence of a super collection remaining in analogue form to possibly enrich the knowledge generated by the digital sub-collections, as much as the sub-collections create a wholly new context in which to consider the analogue. This is a matter of how knowledge – from the point of view of End Users and Intermediaries – is organized by the slide collection. As Godfrey points out,

> The loss of teaching slide collections needs to instigate awareness of how their uniquely embedded taxonomies show how slide and older photographic object collections organized knowledge, and shaped art historical and visual culture studies as well as studio-based curricula."

The reasoning of the women artists who began to collect slides of women’s art is evoked here by both End Users and Intermediaries. The diagram below shows the overlap of criteria for digitization that each group propose. While there is no immediate plan to digitize the WAL slide collection en masse, it is being scanned for its images for publications and exhibition projects (approximately 100 scanned during 2016). The WAL artist submission form allows for her work to be reproduced electronically while


41 Birrell et al., “The DiSCmap Project.” 2011
the copyright remains with the artist. But the criteria listed for digitization potentially expresses an artist’s expectation that improving access to images of her artwork will enhance her work’s impact. As the curator or Intermediary of the WAL slide collection, I facilitate the potential for each woman artist to have an impact on research and/or studies, and teaching. I understand digitization as the means to encourage collaboration between artists, researchers and the Intermediaries that include curators and the key roles that create the digital descriptions that determine how the slides are accessed.

![Figure 8 Table from The DiSC map Project report showing overlap of expectations between users and managers for the digitization of educational image collections](image)

The End User evoked by the DiSC map report stipulates conditions for the digital collection nuanced by the reality of the analogue collection. As a practical outline drawn from a range of stakeholders the desire to “improve access,” “allow for collaboration,” “improve access outside HE” express the curatorial objectives for the WAL slide collection as a Special Collection. The report identifies a constituency that is essential to producing a meaningful encounter between artist and viewer, and reinforces the importance of digitization as a means of facilitating collaboration between shifting research communities; a digitized resource can sustain a research community that might not be supported otherwise. The WAL slide collection responded to the need of women
artists, but its extended significance is underscored by a testimony describing feminist scholarship as an example of an under-supported research community.

The “Feminist Academy” is increasingly fractured through gender mainstreaming and interdisciplinary approaches. Online resources are a key tool in creating online communities across formal subject structures to support academics working in the same subject area.42

Women's Studies is an example of a thematic cluster which justifies digitization as a means of bridging gaps of knowledge, “in provision or to meet an identified research need, locally, nationally or internationally.”43

The report acts as a window to the priorities of academic and research communities at the time of the digital ‘turn’ prior to 2011 when it was published. It is interesting to note that although “specific formats were suggested by participants for the digitization of special collections” it does not appear to include the 35mm slide. I would argue that this reflects a general assumption that slides were teaching rather than research material. Reframing the WAL slide collection in terms of how it would serve research communities as a digitized resource, shows how it meets the criteria for supporting Women’s Studies through Visual Culture, Fine Art and other disciplines on an international scale. There is a significant lack of data on British women artists in relation to the (sparse) representation of women artists slide registers that exist internationally such as the Women's Art Register in Australia44 or the dedicated database of women artists files at a museum collection such as CLARA45 at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in the USA and the Verborgene Museum46 in Germany.

Noting the additional “policy-driven need” that targets “Strategically important and

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
vulnerable subjects” (HEFCE, 2008) promotes digitization in terms of ensuring the accessibility of the material to be digitized and contextualizes the slide collection as “a vulnerable subject.” The report acts as a window to the priorities of academic and research communities at the time of the digital ‘turn’ prior to 2011 when it was published. It is interesting to note that although “specific formats were suggested by participants for the digitization of special collections” it does not appear to include the 35mm slide. But the WAL slide collection’s origin as a feminist political project, while embodied in a format that was not prioritized, retains its strategic importance in any agenda asserting parity for women.

The DiSCmap survey did not ask respondents to suggest specific uses for digitised collections, but End Users sought “to increase the amount of available digital materials across chronological timelines/subjects.”

The usefulness of the DiSCmap report’s detail is how it reveals institutional responses to the overwhelming mass of potentially important collections and distilled these into user-led criteria that outline how the Feminist research community would benefit from access to the WAL slide collection as a digitized resource.

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In practice: the online slide collection

![VADS home page](image)

Figure 9 Screenshot of VADS home page. "VADS provides over 140,000 digital images free for use in education"

The Visual Arts Data Service (VADS) is the primary online repository capturing the development of image-based content from analogue collections for the purposes of HE study. It was established in 1996 and the subject of several development programmes to improve its online useability: “PICTIVA” (2000) and “Enriching Digital Resources” (2008-09). The aim to “facilitate greater academic use” led to improving the user interface by enriching metadata making “more efficient use of an already existing digital collection.” The online functionality of the VADS web site focuses on researching collections that are deposited with VADS rather than as a self-archiving web site that

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crowdsources or encourages the public to contribute archive content through a direct uploading interface as developed by the Manchester District Music Archive. VADS undertook the caretaking of e-collections contributed to the data set and promoted as a digital preservation strategy, the service advises on the preparation of digital collections and welcomes new material. It became a 'popular' repository “approached by members of the arts education community to contribute their digitised collections” expanding the e-collections to include photographic collections.

VADS continues to add collections, and according to a VADS blog of 2016, these additions are greeted by visual resource managers as welcome new content for arts research. However, to date only two of the image collections were digitized from slides, and although digitized images derived from slides are found in other collections, it seems relatively rare to digitize a slide collection. The general rule observed from an American perspective is also played out in this sampling from the VADS collection: that slide collections are usually digitized because the photographic image is unique and is needed to complete a digital image repository in a teaching collection.

The VADS web site represents the image repository most institutionally aligned with the WAL slide collection as a special collection in an institute of Higher Education. The VADS data set is a super-collection in the sense described by the DiSCmap report that adds value to digitized collections by enabling cross-referencing and views of related groupings. In the UK art slide collections are rarely digitized. Despite the lobbying of professional visual resource managers from around 2002 to 2012, the Designer and Artists Copyright Society have not created a digital licence for educational

53 Robinson, “Enhancing the VADS Image Collection JISC Final Report.”
56 Davies, “A Licence to Scan.”
establishments to make digital copies from their slide collections. Maintaining teaching slide collections became largely untenable by 2010 as slide projectors disappeared from teaching spaces. Marie-Therese Gramstadt's research on the shift from analogue to digital visual resources noted in 2011 that “The impact of copyright in the transition from slides to digital images cannot be underestimated” and that:

Whilst the 'death of slides' occurs with or without provision of a digital licence, there is a potential, as well as actual, loss of images for education if unique slide collections are destroyed prior to the creation of digital replacements.

The VADS website is the main web portal to discrete digitization projects based on collections found in UK academic institutions, and safeguards the technical upkeep of online collections, making it the central repository and its format the most likely conduit for a digital collection based on the WAL slides. However, following the VADS model would introduce significant limitations to a project to digitise the WAL which are revealed in the following scenario exploring the VADS web site as a digital research environment holding slide collections. By using a variety of search words to identify digitized 35mm slides amongst the digital images I tested the functionality of the digitized slide in a digitized supercollection representing special collections in the UK.

I concentrated on the search facility and keywords to gauge the relative visibility of digitized slides as artefacts stored in the digitized supercollection. In this database, the term ‘slide’ does not relate exclusively to the photographic diapositive, but is also used as a technical term in design. The keyword search draws from the descriptive text fields making up each image’s record but each image collection has its own variation of fields and terms which are searchable, but not consistent, so that when the word ‘slide’ appears in a field titled ‘work type’ – as it does in the Royal College of Art Record of Student Work collection 17 times – this does not designate works of art using the slide but

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58 Gramstadt, “Changing Light: A Plethora of Digital Tools as Slides Gasp Their Last?”
images that were scanned from a 35mm slide.

There are three collections out of the 58 that appear to be digitised from slide collections: The African Asian Visual Artists Archive (AAVAA), the Design Council Slide Collection and the Goldsmiths Textile Collection & Constance Howard Gallery: Slide Collection. AAVAA is an archive mostly based on its slide collection documenting “exhibition installations and individual works of art.” and is described as “the most comprehensive slide archive of contemporary visual art by artists of African and Asian descent working in the UK since the post-war period.” Its extent can be traced in the 1,934 results obtained by searching the term 'african and asian visual artists archive' omitting the word ‘slide.’ This important archive built from slides is not easily distinguished as a slide collection through the VADS web site. VADS is an example of a digitized presentation that is a seamless transference of images from their original format, without picturing the historical founding material of the archive.

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Figure 10 Screenshot of AAVAA record (Permindar Kaur) in VADS
It is also interesting to note that these digital collections, despite their prominence in the VADS web site, may not be complete representations of the analogue collections. The most extensive collection based on slides, the Design Council Slide Collection at Manchester Metropolitan University (13202 results using the term 'Design Council Slide Collection') is approximately two thirds of the entire collection. The Goldsmiths Textile Collection & Constance Howard Gallery: Slide Collection (1,559 results for 'constance howard slide collection') is a digital asset of Goldsmiths, University of London, and is now managed within the Library Department as part of Special Collections. Its digitization was supported by an AHRC Resource Enhancement grant when it operated separately as the Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles (CHRRCT) between 2003-2011.

At the time of writing the WAL slide collection is not being considered for digitization by the Library at Goldsmiths, University of London, where it is housed. The scale of the project is prohibitively expensive and not considered a priority. A section of artists’ slide files including 1200 slides were scanned for the Artworklife research project in 2009. Led by Rosamund Davies, this was a project based at Greenwich University for a pilot web site. The WAL retained copies of the high-resolution images (TIFFS) that were created from the scans along with the thumbnail JPEGs created for the web site. The Artworklife web site has been archived since the website host stopped supporting the version of php (a kind of scripting language) used to build the site. This prompted efforts

to devise a way of hosting the site at Goldsmiths with no success to date.\textsuperscript{64} Instead a selection of the 1200 slide scan JPEGs has been attached to approximately 90 artists’ records in Goldsmiths’ online Archive and Textiles catalogue. The images (maximum of 3 per record) are not annotated or described in a way that distinguishes the digital form or online presence of the WAL slide collection from a basic model.

\textsuperscript{64} Former BA Design Education student, Kevin Chin, designed a new interface to showcase the scans of artists' work, but the structure of Goldsmiths institutional web site cannot accommodate this database to date. The website is archived on the WayBack Machine. 
The post-slide digital landscape [‘digital art history’]

The position of the WAL slide collection is as a unique, but challengingly large slide collection when comparing the 13,200 digital images made from the largest slide collection in VADS (the Design Council) to the 45,000+ slides in the WAL. As digitization changed the teaching slide collection to become a local dataset managed by a Visual Resources curator, only remnants of analogue slide collections – assessed as unique – are likely to be retained for future digitization by academic and cultural institutions. The future position of the WAL slide collection depends on how the material will be managed to accommodate or respond to the digital teaching tools and environments that academia shifts towards.

As a research associate at VADS, Marie-Therese Gramstadt's enquiry focused on art scholarship’s move from slide collection to digital environment. She reviewed new developments in terms of those practices unique to the slide collection that were being remediated by new digital presentation tools. She argued that:

The ‘death of slides’ should not prevent digital technology being challenged by analogue alternatives and processes; it is important to have those dialogues in order to facilitate a more holistic and enhanced arts education environment.

The notion of such an ongoing dialogue reiterates the aim of this research which questions standard practices for rendering artist slides into digital study material that suppress the materiality of the slide collection. The report, written in 2010, highlights how digital image presentation tools mimic the analogue slide library system, such as the online light box and the projection in the dark, even as virtual learning environments were also developing “new generation presentation tools” that are online developments of Web 2.0 technology, such as Prezi. Although the report describes a transitional stage it

66 Gramstadt, “Changing Light: A Plethora of Digital Tools as Slides Gasp Their Last?”
presages the ongoing haunting of the digital by the analogue in educational settings, and brought into critical review by projects like the Tate’s workshop series The Cultural Value of the Digital discussed later in this chapter.

The impact that collection digitization has had on those scholarship practices established by the art slide library is beginning to be examined in professional development workshops bringing image managers, academics and museum and gallery professionals together to generate knowledge exchange. “Beyond the Digitized Slide Library” was a workshop organized by the Getty Institute in 2014 to deliver hands on experience in new techniques of art historical research. The documentation made available as a web site resource highlights developments triggered by the digitized image to discuss the ramifications of a digital art history. It introduces an overview of computer-assisted scholarship relating to topics such as “image processing, virtual modelling, data mining documents, cultural analytics” supported by repositories and collections. This provides a sense of a potential future context for the WAL slide collection as a digital art history that employs and navigates technology to raise questions for feminist scholarship and the artist’s archive.

The “Resources” link includes a link to Collaborative Notes that include a series of “questions, provocations and statements” that convey the practitioner’s vision of possibility tempered by experience.

- Provocation: How can we retain the optimism about the possibilities these new tools afford without forgetting about the labor that they mask, and in some cases, erase?
- Digital art history has enhanced the study of visual materials in terms of abilities to aggregate, analyze, and collaborate.
- Digital art history can transform research practice and provoke new

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69 Ibid.
questions; results or responses to these may or may not be presented in digital format.

• Digital art history could open up the practice and study of art history -- make it more inclusive and accessible relative to both scholarship and public engagement. What are the limits of such an aim, and is there a point at which this aim is no longer beneficial to art historians or to the public?

• I hope for better integration of large-scale dh [digital humanities] projects; can it pipeline across disciplines, constituencies and countries; a self-reflexive practice that opens new fields of art historical investigation and, in turn, critically and ethically impacts the relations between art, science and knowledge-production.70

Johanna Drucker, one of the key speakers at the 2014 summer institute, wrote pointedly in her article titled “Is there a digital art history?” an appraisal of the innovative scholarship enabled by digitization, but also how the fundamental changes to the practice of art history have been absorbed unquestioned. The article appeared in a 2013 issue of Visual Resources, published by the professional association at the vanguard of this change, and took a position to share the view that digitization is not just a means of allowing art historians to enjoy enhanced access to images.

But even if this conversion into digital access and delivery has wrought substantive changes in the world of visual resources management, it has not had a ripple effect on the intellectual foundations of art history. Digitized materials are basic to “how we do art history” in our time—but the arrival of digital practices has been both a stealth attack on the systems of production and a rapidly naturalized condition of reception. [...] Art historians, and other humanists, must first acknowledge that digital models of knowledge in their area of expertise are being made daily—through digitization projects, prototypes of archival production, virtual rendering, image study, metadata production, classification schemes, and finding aids, to name only the most conspicuous elements in the digital landscape. Once they recognize the gravity of this fact, they will realize that they do not want to cede production of the digital future of art history.

70 Notes uploaded by Francesca Albrezzi August 8 2014) www.bit.ly/uclagettydah
to those outside the field.\textsuperscript{71}

The WAL slide collection may not have a distinct online presence nor have the slides’ content been absorbed in a digital supercollection, but it is part of a “digital knowledge model” that is the online archive and textiles catalogue of Goldsmiths.\textsuperscript{72} It is a finding aid at best that takes the online researcher through an alphabetical hierarchy to a mainly generic record description individualized by the artist’s name.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{goldsmiths.png}
\caption{Online Goldsmiths Special Collections Archive catalogue entry showing hierarchy for holdings in Women’s Art Library}
\end{figure}


Figure 14 Online Goldsmiths Special Collections Archive catalogue entry showing hierarchy for holdings in Women’s Art Library
Figure 15 Online Goldsmiths Special Collections Archive catalogue entry showing hierarchy for holdings in Women's Art Library

As scholarship now tends to take the accessibility of digital images for granted the integrity of the WAL slide collection is undermined by the generic descriptions that represent it online as researchers gain little from a photographic collection that is not visually available digitally. However the fact that a collection may never be digitized in its entirety should not preclude a collection from becoming the subject of a digital art history as Drucker describes:

“[…] a clear distinction has to be made between the use of online repositories and images, which is digitized art history, and the use of analytic techniques enabled by computational technology that is the proper domain of digital art history.”

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73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
The digital image renders art historical information into machine readable ‘metric value’ which, as Drucker points out, produces a potential for a “scale of analysis, as well as the range, is unparalleled in prior art historical research.” What artists that produced slides in order to raise their visibility might find interesting in terms of the digital iteration of their slide, is how the production of this new digital data from their original slide places it in a realm of analysis that impacts on:

“the critical study of the social production of art and the transactions through which works circulate as real and symbolic objects in the social imaginary.”

Drucker's article stands out from the general discourse because she addresses the issue of digitization beyond the image in a way that situates digitization beyond reproductive image-making and connects how the research conducted for this thesis employed digital tools. The WAL slide collection is not yet part of a ‘digitized art history,’ but its imperative is to remain in view to represent women artists’ practices. This research takes a closer look at the data environment that the WAL artist’s slide would be absorbed into to become accessible to a digital art history.

The Slide Walk photograph is a creative intervention in the process of creating digital images, as it creates a productive “gap” as Alexander Kluge describes which enables creative thinking about the shift from analogue to digital that is changing how we experience artwork and art practices. The Slide Walk’s visible imperfections identify it as a snapshot instead of a standard scan. It visually sits between the photographic slide and the digital scan, but as a digital object it can be explored in terms of what it has in common with other digital images: its automated metadata. To explore the metadata of these different digital images I use the commonplace digital tool Microsoft Picture Editor to open up the files.

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75 Ibid.
The Slide Walk images’ metadata includes how the camera was physically set up, whether the flash was used, what shutter speed and focal length, in addition to the recorded time. It conjures up the equipment and an active photographer.

Figure 16 Screenshot of photograph from Slide Walk 11 May 2013 15:42:58 with Properties panel in Microsoft Office Picture Manager

Figure 17 Screenshot of scan of slide held in work folder with Properties panel open in Microsoft Office Picture Manager
The metadata of a slide that has been scanned rather than photographed reveals an empty camera properties field, with no information about how its result was achieved; it suggests an anonymized process. The artist’s information appears nowhere else in this setting except in the detail of the JPEG’s name.

Detail is reinstated for images presented online, but separated from the image. The metadata attached to the image of a scanned slide from the AAVAA collection in VADS is less detailed, losing its time “Created.” Instead the image is described in another digital space creating the record in which the image is embedded.

![Figure 16 Screenshot of VADS record from AAVAA collection using right-click View Image option](image)

The image’s meaning is inscribed in the fields of information. The information would not have originated from the original 35mm slide and shows the creator of the record taking on an interpretive role to enrich this digitized image. The metadata generated by the digital photograph of a slide and the scan of a slide reveals common terms in digital image and time they were created and modified, the density of its detail in terms of the file size and the number of pixels. Even as no two digital images are truly identical,
neither are their moments of reconstitution on the screens of wildly disparate devices. What the Slide Walk photographs produce within the gap between slide and scanned image is a sense of the distance that digitization imposes between artist and image that is reinstated to a degree by picturing the slide mount. The digitization of images does not necessarily deliver the art historical researcher to an image-led experience let alone an artist-led one. As Drucker argues:

[...] most of the first generation digital projects were text-based, data-driven, or metadata-focused. Why? The input devices for creating digital files were alphanumeric keyboards. Words, texts, numbers, and statistical information comprised the sources that were migrated from analog to digital. By contrast, images do not have a “natural” equivalent in digital form. In digital formats, all images are radical remediations, usually several times over—scans of pictures of original works, at best, and oftentimes, scans made from slides, reproductions, and printed versions that are a step or more removed from the original. 77

Nina Lager Vestberg describes in detail how digitization renders picture research more dependent on text or ‘word-bound’ as

the digitised catalogue and the keyword-based search engine have all but replaced the visual memory and expertise previously held by picture librarians and archivists. 78

The shift in how we are enabled to search, not by looking but by describing, distinguishes our interaction with the digital image. Vestberg cites the work of Doireann Wallace who observes how,

the keywords assigned to digital image files are not so much intended to ‘indicate’ the location of the hidden image, but need to stand in for it’ (2010 “Words are keys to the image bank” Revisualizing Visual Culture)’ and how “‘the keyword cluster aspires to be synonymous with the image’ […]Put another way, we could say that the keywords try to create a

77 Drucker, “Is There a ‘Digital’ Art History?”
textual image, which corresponds as closely as possible to the visual one.”

The Digital Art Historian's Toolkit recently published as an online textbook with a collection of resources is based on the summer institutes “Beyond the Slide Library” (2014 and 2015) provides links organised under headings anticipating the art historian's use: Image analysis tools, Mapping, Exhibit platforms, Data Visualization Tools, Image annotation, 3D. Reviewing these tools has become part of understanding what the expectations for the digitized image have become, how for instance it has to be embedded with metadata using controlled vocabulary, circulated, collected into a repository and ultimately readable in a way that the original could not be. What a digital art history enables is the creation of new objects of research that are yielded by digital processes, computer-assisted research that is based on the “aggregation of the information in digital files—processing the data with mathematical rather than optical methods.” As Drucker writes:

What is the object? It becomes the effect of these processes, constituted by the integration of information, and not a static object merely perceived as such. Dynamic queries reconfigure an object through inquiry and along lines of analyses that are multifaceted, not literal, or reductive.

The question this research raises in response to the prospect of digitizing the Women's Art Library slide collection is perhaps more complicated by the possibilities of a digital art history, than a digitized one. If, for instance “dynamic queries” become “not literal, or reductive,” would the collection's political intent become more or less visible? This is the issue that underlies the principal question of what else an artist’s slide represents beside her artwork. Exploring various practices within a broadly drawn framework of digitization introduces the question of how intersecting practices constitute the WAL slide and its collection as a performative feminist project. The challenge is to understand

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79 Ibid., p.123
81 https://ucla-beyond-slide-library.github.io/DAH101/About.html
82 Drucker, “Is There a ‘Digital’ Art History?”
how the digitized slide might function as an object of cultural heritage and how cultural heritage collections were being digitized to engage with a networked audience.

“The Distributed Museum”83 and “Digital Culture”

“The digital is primarily understood within museums as a technical tool rather than as a knowledge system and a culture.”84 When the term “digital” was explored during the AHRC funded project “Cultural Value: Modelling Cultural Value within New Media Cultures and Networked Participation” in 2014, four “modes” of using it emerged:

The digital as a tool as a means to deliver a productive end / output of a particular practice, project, activity

The digital as a medium / media particularly in differentiation to traditional fine art mediums such as painting, sculpture, printmaking (although less so in relation to photography, which is still seen as a young medium in the museum)

The digital as technology—the binary opposite of modernist artistic practice and art history, understood as the essentialised expressions of human individualism

The digital as culture the ubiquitous, naturalised condition and character of daily life, whether on or offline, which underpins contemporary global existence, whatever the proximity or access to digital and online culture 85

Digital art history is an example of an evolving culture that is defined by the digital in other ways besides networking, for example the shift in expectations around access created by the digital capacity to aggregate information into supercollections of art documents. However, network culture featured prominently in the workshops titled

84 Victoria Walsh, Andrew Dewdney, and Emily Pringle, “Cultural Value: Modelling Cultural Value within New Media Cultures and Networked Participation” (London: TATE, 2014).
85 Ibid.
“Cultural value and the digital” that were part of the Cultural Value project undertaken by Tate, the Royal College of Art and London South Bank University in 2014, to unravel how:

[…] most contemporary professional practice, policy-formation and understandings of cultural value remains resolutely analogue. This is despite the profound transformation in how knowledge and contemporary culture is being produced and experienced due to the fundamental changes in human communication that digital technologies and network cultures are creating.86

The second strand focussed on Digital Access (2-3 June 2014) reflecting on methods of working with users and understanding their online behaviours in relation to the challenges of “the digitization of archives and collections practices.” The discussion was framed by questions such as: Why has 'Big Data' become so important as a way of grasping the human-computer interface? How is working with data interfaces transforming the visualization and experience of culture? What are the politics of the network that (re) define the ontology and life of cultural objects? The question of how network culture changes the photographic image – or the slide as photographic object – is relevant to these readings on the digital.

Katrina Sluis (Curator of Digital Programmes, Photographers Gallery) considers examples of Big Data such as Flickr as sites of collaborative authorship, invoking participation on a scale that has changed the photographic image. The photograph as an authored artform is 'defended' by initiatives like The Photographers Gallery, while the proliferation of the digital photography as a universal practice has meant that the image itself has been “computationally remediated beyond recognition.” Sluis asks, “How do we deal with the overwhelming arrival of ubiquitous photography?” and suggests that rather than try to “slow it down” by subjecting it to more layers of semiotic analysis and theories of the image, that “another set of tools” is needed to understand how the image is made functional in “an environment of multiple simultaneous network images.”87

86 “Cultural Value and the Digital: Practice, Policy and Theory | Tate.”
87 “Cultural Value and the Digital: Practice, Policy and Theory - Audio Recordings | Tate.”
proposes that “another kind of cultural value” is being produced in this “age of Big Data” resulting from a relentless emphasis on participation, interactivity, peer to peer working, and networking that produces an exhausting demand for feedback. At this point cultural values are shifting and although the photographic image remains essential to how we view art, it is simultaneously being rendered invisible – a point that resonates with John Tagg’s description of the photographer as the unrecognized piece-worker of the archive. Yet Sluis is particularly aware of the “the politics of the network that (re)define the ontology and life of cultural objects” and reiterated that as photography endures as a key tool for the study and dissemination of art that “we need to put reproduction back into the cultural politics of the object.”

My research is questioning how the cultural politics of the WAL slide collection are enmeshed with issues of digital image reproduction and distribution. If the entire collection could be digitized, how would this electronic reproduction of reproduced artworks fulfil the WAL’s feminist purpose to enact cultural change in the “ubiquitous, naturalized” everyday that defines “digital culture” – returning to the definition emerging from the Tate discussions? While the prospect of digitization is problematic because of the discourses that can be suppressed in the process, technological development has also created new spaces such as the open source web-publishing platform, Omeka, which connects digitized image collections with interactive museum display. Especially relevant to the slide is how the photograph persists at the centre of these questions, because whatever the unique qualities of the WAL artist’s slide, it too persists as an everyday document of art practice and a gesture of solidarity. How can an object like this

89 “Cultural Value and the Digital: Practice, Policy and Theory - Audio Recordings | Tate.”
90 “IMLS Funds Omeka Everywhere – Omeka,” accessed September 21, 2014, http://omeka.org/blog/2014/09/18/IMLS-Funds-Omeka-Everywhere/ . In September 2014 it was announced that the Institute of Museum and Library Services in the USA had awarded a grant to Omeka, an open source image management software to develop Omeka Everywhere, aimed at creating "a simple, cost-effective solution for connecting onsite web content and in-gallery multi-sensory experiences, affordable to museums of all sizes and missions, by capitalizing on the strengths of two successful collections-based open-source software projects: Omeka and Open Exhibits."
‘read’ as a digital reproduction? Andrew Dewdney, one of the Tate projects' co-researchers writes:

The paradox produced by the circulation of what stubbornly refuses to be anything other than the photographic image in digital cultures is that while the screen transmission produces something other than a photograph, its precise effect in everyday life is to make the photographic image more present and saturating.\(^9^1\)

Is it inevitable that digitizing the WAL slides would result in a kind of networked circulation that renders them merely photographic and deactivates the collection as a unified body with a feminist cultural intent? What happens to the way the slide represents the artist and the collection when a digital image is made of it? What is left out of the digital image method of ‘reproduction’? I would argue that, despite the fact that the slides represent artists’ artworks, the WAL slide collection needs to be considered as a form of extended art practice rather than as an example of photography as reproduction. This is necessary to acknowledge the uniqueness of each slide as an artist’s production and review what this contributes to the WAL slide collection as a unique project.

Dewdney considers how the digital image embodies and therefore represents differently to the analogue.

The history and contemporary practices of photography currently being elevated by and admitted to […] museums and galleries is not photography as reproduction, not the networked image, but an abstraction of the analogue and its historical archive […] the paradigm of representation, which sustained the analogue photograph's embodiment of the real, has been made redundant. What is now at stake is the struggle for a new paradigm, a new epistemology […] admitting the computational means of reproduction.\(^9^2\)

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What does this mean for a collection of photographic objects, purporting to represent artworks and embodying a network of practices inspiring a politically motivated cultural collection? Can the politics of digital reproduction become part of a slide’s cultural purpose? What are the political concerns of reproduction that become urgent with the imminent reproduction/digitization of these slides, that originated as the ‘information communication technology’ of choice for a group of feminist artists? Digitization might reinstate the slide as an image carrier with political intent, but the notion of the digitally distributed museum or gallery looms large on the cultural digital landscape and where can the feminist slide collection politically work? The wariness that Sluis expresses reveals an important gap between digital culture and the digitizing of culture that should inform how cultural producers, including artists' archives, approach the question of digitization. Sluis does not agree with the suggestion from Victoria Walsh that we should “fall in love with the pixel”\(^\text{93}\) and view digitization primarily as a useful optical technology that enhances our experience of cultural objects. Sluis replies (along with Joanna Sassoon\(^\text{94}\) and others writing critically about the digitization of analogue collections) that digitizing artworks is “a converged set of social and cultural practices.” Images undergo a crucial material change. Sluis’s reply suggests a politics of visibility related to knowledge production that contextualizes our apparent wealth of digitized images of artwork.

The problem that we face is the opacity of the interface, the absolute opacity of how these images come to the screen and how inaccessible they are. This presents a huge problem for knowledge production. What are the methods through which to understand the Google Art Project, [to understand] what that interface is doing […] when you walk into this idea that you slow the image down and it will somehow reveal some kind of truth […] is dangerous in a way and it encourages us to look through the image as pure representation instead of looking at the apparatus that surrounds it […] That is incredibly important at the moment, as we move

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\(^{93}\) “Cultural Value and the Digital: Practice, Policy and Theory | Tate.”

from web 2.0 to web 3.0.”

Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sutherland also raise this issue of how the mass digitization of texts, even as academic initiatives, are equally ‘opaque’. The result represents/reproduces a lack of opportunity for the deployment of tacit knowledge to query information in texts – including images – in terms of “the nuanced and coded registers” analogue materials convey. As Deegan and Sutherland observe, computer retrieval depends on explicit knowledge becoming coded:

Searching in large databases requires explicit codification, but searches constructed explicitly are blunt instruments, returning many thousands of hits ranked by criteria that are not always apparent.

Regardless of the vastness of digital material available, the ‘explicit’ search can be crude.

As the digital becomes less about human interfacing and more about machine-readibility, Sluis asserts that it is vital to consider more carefully how code generates meaning and cultural value, stating that in terms of how we produce knowledge “[…] it's a crisis that we stay at the surface of the object and don't understand the network of associations that produce it on our screen.” The article “Concerning the undecidability of the digital image” Sluis co-authored with Daniel Rubinstein, suggests “the new paradigm, a new epistemology” that Dewdney calls for. The dynamic between the researcher and the photographic material she is learning from or querying is not only a matter of what she can find, but how the digitized material is found in a fluid volatile reactive environment defined by users.

Katrina Sluis speaking at Cultural Value and the Digital: Conference and Final Event (7 July 2014) “Cultural Value and the Digital: Practice, Policy and Theory - Audio Recordings | Tate.”


Ibid.
As photography becomes an encoded, networked object, the emphasis shifts from considering it in visual terms towards the semantic processes valorized within computational culture. This in turn establishes photography as a kind of unstable surface that produces meanings not through indexicality or representation but through the aggregation and topologies of data [...] that represent relations amongst data, and the way in which the movement of images, their clusterings and accretions reorganize themselves around the movement of the user as they traverse the interface.  

The Slide Walk initiates this important recognition of the user as it activates the mass of the WAL slide collection by producing digital data with a camera moving across individual slides in files. The process is a tracing that interrupts the pattern of standard digitization routines, introducing the subjectivity of the digitizer/photographer/performer to question the precision or intelligibility of digital visuality. The Cultural Value of the Digital Workshops identified “a contemporary visual crisis in culture” that impacted on how artwork was being experienced “through the processes of remediation and particularly the logic of hypermediacy” to the point where,

> every reproduced image [...] stands metaphorically between the subject and the object [...] Remediation and the transcultural are the new historical default positions of contemporary visuality.  

What knowledge is produced by the digital version of a woman artist’s slide as the digitization process 'transmediates' the image without the slide’s mount? Transmediation would be a more accurate description of a more complex digitization process designed to highlight the original's complex materiality in a way:

> which allows the looking at and the using of images as socially salient objects to be active and reciprocal, in that it does not imply merely authority, control and passive consumption.

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99 Andrew Dewdney, Post Critical Museology, 203.
100 Elizabeth Edwards and Max-Planck-Institut Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, “Photographs: Material Form and the Dynamic Archive,” in Photo Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History /
Transmediation is “a cultural process”\textsuperscript{101} that “recodes” from one “formal value system to another.” While it might increase the visibility of a work by distributing it electronically, it potentially obscures the value system it might have originated from, the “different micro-histories […] made up of multiple patterns of intention.”\textsuperscript{102}

The digitized experience of legacy heritage reveals the implications of relying on mass digitization to enable the slide collection to occupy public cultural spaces. At this point it is useful to step outside the museum and focus on the power of the projected slide. The slide of a woman artist's work is an object with more than a micro-history, but as the preferred agit-prop tool to promote a counter-narrative to the museum. One of the first instances of a collection – an archive – of slides of women's artwork being presented in a public museum space was the unauthorized projection onto the side of the Whitney Museum of American Art which was, as Lippard puts it,

\begin{quote}
\textit{a nice twist on site-specificity. (Thanks to our efforts and of the Women’s Art Slide Registry, the Whitney included four times as many women as they had before.)}
\end{quote}

A selection of slides from the WAL slide collection performed a similar symbolic transgression during a special event held at the Houses of Parliament in London to

\textsuperscript{101} Joanna Sassoon, “Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction.”
\textsuperscript{102} Edwards and Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, “Photographs: Material Form and the Dynamic Archive.”
\textsuperscript{103} Lucy R. Lippard, “Curating by Numbers,” \textit{Tate Papers}, no. 12, accessed October 8, 2014, http://www.centroartepecci.prato.it/htm/biblioteca/bibliog/1-live/down/02c\_lippard\_tatepapers\_20091000\_12.pdf. “In 1970 Ad Hoc Women Artists Committee used conceptual art forms in feminist protests against the predominantly male Whitney Annual exhibitions. We distributed a fake press release purportedly coming from the Whitney, proudly announcing that since the museum had been founded by a woman it was only appropriate that that year’s sculpture show would consist of 50% women and 50% ‘non white’ (as we quaintly put it) artists. On the model of Kosuth’s faked artist’s membership cards to MoMA in 1969, we also forged invitations to the Whitney opening so we could organise a sit-in inside the museum, and we projected slides of works by women artists on the outside of the museum – a nice twist on site-specificity. (Thanks to our efforts and of the Women’s Art Slide Registry, the Whitney included four times as many women as they had before.) Luckily all this was done more or less anonymously, since the FBI had been called in to catch the criminals (they did not catch any). As Lee Lozano put it, ‘Seek the extremes. That’s where all the action is.
fundraise for the Museum of Women’s Art in London.104

Researching the cultural implications of digitizing the WAL slide collection turns to the physical properties of the 35mm slide that made it an effective communication tool for women artists in a range of ways that include the public projection. The process of digitizing reinstates the option to project that was lost to the analogue slide with the switch from slide to data projectors as Kodak phased out slide projectors from 2004. Digital images of slides also restate the politicized functionality of the WAL slides as these women’s artworks regain their capacity to be publicly projected. Digitization re-activates the analogue slide’s functionality in a way that references the past as well as present and future, with implications for how digitization might reflect the WAL slide collection’s feminist purpose.

The WAL slide collection reacts against the inconspicuousness of women’s art practice by collecting material whose visibility is achieved by being performed in a range of ways. How can the slide collection continue to be performed in the future? The Slide Walk practice informing this research produces digital records of an image collection that was built for a set of practices based on the 35mm slide. What of these practices – such as projecting in a darkened room, consulting on a light table, preparing for distribution or projection – is essential to archive along with the image in order to ensure we are archiving related practices that give meaning to the material beyond subject content?

Alexander Horwath, director of the Austrian Film Museum points to the need to maintain practices as well as digital objects in the interest of:

preserving human culture not only as an abstraction, as a musée imaginaire, but in such a way that its manifold historical forms can be fully grasped and activated a few hundred years from now. For this to

happen, they need to persist both as artefacts and as practices, especially in cases like film, where the form is not represented by an object but by a performance.\textsuperscript{105}

The practice of the slide show certainly persists in digital form, as to an extent the practices associated with producing and managing slides to promote an art practice through reproduction. However, the identity politics practiced through slide collection is less easily transferred to a digital space using the digitized slide – as evidenced by the slide collections digitized and incorporated in VADS. It is also misleading to assume that a slide is being archived because it is being digitized. This is true not only in terms of how accurately the slide is digitally rendered, but also because digital objects or data need a complex preservation strategy to become robust archives. As Deegan and Sutherland observe:

\[\ldots\text{in the case of books, preserving the carrier is all that need be done. With digital data, by contrast, the carrier may be in good-as-new condition after 20 years, but it may also be impossible to access on any current technology.}\textsuperscript{106}\]

The long-term digital preservation techniques being developed not only include the original output technology, but combinations of “refreshing, migration and reformatting, emulation, data archaeology and output to analogue media.”\textsuperscript{107}

During the course of this research I was introduced to a project exporting digital data to paper. Called ChronoTape, it is a hybrid, analogue interface for a digital time-line project that,

interrogates the value relationships between physical and digital materials, personal and professional practices, and the ways that records are produced, maintained and ultimately inherited.\textsuperscript{108}


\textsuperscript{106} Marilyn Deegan, \textit{Transferred Illusions}. p. 164

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{108} “ChronoTape: Tangible Timelines For Family History,” accessed October 27, 2014,
The features that are valued in the development of this paper-based method of data storage made the ChronoTape stand out as a model of how the digital images from a Slide Walk might be stored as an analogue object (a spool of paper) and rendered performative as a playback. The emphasis on material includes the body of the digitizer as the ChronoTape “captures and embeds traces of the researcher within the document of their own research” and “allows for graceful degradation of both its physical and digital components in order to deliberately accommodate the passage of information into the future.”

The more conventional understanding of analogue storage for data files includes printing code on to paper, but more usual is printing onto to microfilm, Computer Output to Microfilm (COM), with each page of data transferred to a single frame of film. COM is best for bi-tonal images, and is not suitable for greyscale let alone colour images. However this level of archiving data removes the process from the working space of artists, “Intermediaries” and other “End Users.” The ChronoTape stores images as JPEGs, and while this compressed version of an image is not adequately high resolution for recommended digital image archiving (eg TIFFS or RAW), it is a process that individualizes the practice of archiving. It seems that at this point there is no analogue output that might be used to safely take a digital image database into the future apart from perhaps printing images using archival ink on archival paper to be stored archivally, one image at a time.

Deegan and Sutherland's question regarding the role of digital surrogates is significant in considering how scanning becomes an integral part of the process of deaccessioning a slide collection, preceding final disposal.

http://www.academia.edu/1477351/ChronoTape_Tangible_Timelines_For_Family_History.

Ibid.

Marilyn Deegan, Transferred Illusions. p.167

The WAL slide collection is held in a special collection and its immediate analogue future is secure. What kind of digitization does it need? Would it be better to create a flexible possibly temporary digital solution that makes accessible what we understand to be important about the WAL slide collection today on the understanding that this interpretation might change in the future? Would this give more value to the analogue originals and ensure the collection’s preservation? Digitization suggests preservation, but is it also a possible threat to the analogue original? As Deegan and Sutherland’s study suggests, to ascertain how ‘good’ a digitization project will be for the WAL slide collection, the questions of image quality and longevity may not be the right questions to ask.

Are we preserving features of the objects themselves or only the information they contain? Beyond that, how does surrogacy affect the status of an original: does its surrogate existence also denote in some way the further preservation of the thing itself, now sealed away under conditions of greater safety, or does surrogacy imply the exact opposite, releasing its curators from future concern for the original? 112

The politics of reproduction

The literature described in this chapter frame the digitized slide in different digital settings – the image collection, the data, the museum and the archive – to question how the WAL slide might represent the feminist project: the WAL slide collection. Both the digital image and the slide embody a range of different practices and aspirations regarding sharing knowledges and making cultural connections. The diverse scenarios relating the digital to the analogue point to digitization as a process that “engenders objects that create their own context, that exist in a continuum of becoming through use.”113

112 Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sutherland, Transferred Illusions : Digital Technology and the Forms of Print / Marilyn Deegan and Kathryn Sutherland. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).p.158
113 Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, “The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original through Its
How would a digitized 35mm slide from an activist slide registry be used, what kind of context would it engender, what kind of continuum does this digitized photographic object belong to? The readings in this chapter also considered display practices that have been enabled by digitization. Glen Willumson reveals the potential loss of historical meaning in the transition to digitized emulations of how material photographic objects originally functioned. Other practices apply the digital to 'renegotiate the image' and/or the archive and/or the display. These examples of how “new digital media may enhance the experience of the art-archive” recall the purpose of making identity-based slide registries to continue to redefine what constitutes the art archive through the online environment. This research explores creative derivations from the archive that not only demonstrate innovative connections between digital and archival practices, but also describes a thriving field of transdisciplinary research showing how the art archive can effect digital scholarship. Literature focusing more on the archive include discussions of digital futures as conceived by critical practitioners such as Alexander Kluge and evolved in collaborative projects between curators and artists such as those presented in *Re-action: The digital archive experience* which:

[... ] investigates the scenario where the archive, instead of having ontological foundations with fixed categories, enters into a space in which knowledge is stored and (re)produced through interaction and reaction.

While media art projects may date quickly, this research project questions the process of

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116 Vaknin et al., *All This Stuff.*

117 Ekardt, “Returns of the Archaic, Reserves for the Future.”

118 Morten Søndergaard et al., *Re_action.*
digitization in terms of how it presents art practice. It seeks to visualise different parameters and rationales for digitally (re)producing archive or cultural collections. The WAL slide collection is itself the interface to a unique visual experience of artworks by women, suggesting that it is already a complex of different features that would defy digital ‘re(production)’ or interactive display. The experience of digitized slides in online environments conveys little of their material qualities or impression of what made them collectable, i.e. there is no sense of the journey the slide has made from artist’s hands to becoming a collected artefact. How might the process of digital ‘re(production)’ make it possible for an audience to appreciate the slide’s history or what it represents besides artwork?

The case study of the digital reproduction of Veronese’s *Le Nozze di Cana* which re-situated the painting in its ‘original’ setting in the dining hall of San Giorgio monastery using 3D and high resolution digital technology, led Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe to reframe the idea of reproduction in a way that resonates with the artist’s slide representing her artwork. What do we mean by original and what is its purpose? Latour and Lowe write that a work of art is not contained but should be understood in terms of its “trajectory” which takes shape through its rematerialization in reproduction.

Facsimiles, especially those relying on complex (digital) techniques, are thus the most fruitful way to explore the original and even to redefine what originality is.¹¹⁹

The 35mm slide was the ubiquitous photographic reproduction of artwork deployed by artists, galleries and teachers of art, but the WAL accumulated slides to challenge 'the canon' set by the ubiquitous presence of male artwork in public collections where women artists were scarcely present. Women artists used the slide to reproduce artwork and create an open collective image of women’s art practices that also challenged the idea of a dominant authoritative discourse. This suggests that digitization can introduce a political dimension to the question of reproduction, in which the digital slide reproduces

¹¹⁹ Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, “The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original through Its Facsimiles.”
not just the artwork, but also the individual art practice, the slide collection and the action of raising visibility. Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe are describing the highest quality possible for digital reproduction, but nevertheless suggest how digital reproductions create a continuum for an artwork, its virtual trajectory. In this case, where the slide represents a moment in the continuum of a woman's art practice, the digital Slide Walk image reproduces not just the information but the visibility of the slide itself, for the tacit knowledge it also embodies, has already instigated a virtual trajectory for the artwork and art practice that originated it.

![Image of a slide with handwritten notes.](image)

**Figure 17 Slide Walk 04 August 2012, 12:57:54**

The question shifts from whether the digital slide loses something of the original slide, to proving the slide remains a fertile site of reproduction, as a digitized object, since

> A copy, then is proof of fecundity […] to be original means necessarily to be the origin of lineage. That which has no progeny […] is called, not
original, but sterile, barren. Rather than ask, Is this isolated piece an original or a facsimile? we might, then, inquire, Is this segment in the trajectory of the work of art barren or fertile?  

While the demands of digital art history steer the greater part of image digitization towards big data, would another approach to digitization that questions originality be a more productive framing for the slides of the WAL collection? The proliferation of images of women's art was about building evidence and resulted in a critical mass of rich and unique documentation but its “slavish” reproduction would only succeed in disseminating under-researched *oeuvres*. There is also the question of how the collectiveness of the feminist project is represented, through mirroring the full extent or reinterpreting the dynamic of its collectiveness. In considering what can be digitally reproduced, Latour and Lowe reference the “aura” of the artwork and it is equally productive to consider the “aura” of the artist’s slide where multiple practices converge to create a unique object.

While the scale of the slide collection precludes the possibility of facsimile, within the context of this research, Latour and Lowe’s proposition suggests how the digital might serve the artist’s slide as a moment in the trajectory of a woman artist’s practice in addition to being an image of one of her artworks. “Surely,” they write,

the issue is about accuracy, understanding, and respect – the absence of which results in ‘slavish’ replication. The same digital techniques may be used either slavishly or originally. It depends again on which features one chooses to bring into focus and which one leaves out.  

Latour and Lowe refer their readers to the original painting in the Louvre and the facsimile that takes the original's place. Which of the objects is more original when the facsimile of essentially a site-specific work has restored the painting to exactly where the artist left it? The digital reproduction redefines the notion of the original for not only is it “required by the new time,” the authors maintain that, “all originals have to be reproduced anyway, simply to survive, it is crucial to be able to discriminate between

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120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.p.287
good and bad reproductions.”

The question of good and bad reproduction leads this research to reflect further on what makes good digitization for slide collections, especially in the light of Dewdney’s networked digitized “contemporary visuality” haunted by the presence of “every reproduced image” mentioned earlier. The distinction drawn up by Dahlström et al. between mass and critical digitization in their article “As We May Digitize” in 2012 considers the impact of digitization on collections with the addition of how it brings about identity and policy changes in the cultural heritage institutions that house them: museums, libraries and archives (MLA). The article introduces the term “critical digitization” to contrast with ‘mass digitization’ to discuss strategies that reflect the needs of the institution introducing a comparison that usefully maps out the advantages and disadvantages as each deploy different practices of digitization. The comparison highlights how the needs of the WAL slide collection that this research identifies, draws back from the WAL slide collection as an archive housed in a library towards the WAL slide collection as a museum collection. The research set out in this chapter moves from understanding digitization in terms of educational settings to include the work of museums and issues of display, as the methodology of experimental digitization – the Slide Walks – highlights the slide as an assemblage of art practices. While the methodology of the Slide Walk is constructed to disrupt habits of digitization, it shares many of the features with “critical digitization” that Dahlström et al. from, “Critically recognizes the distortion digitization brings about” to “Treats documents as graphical, spatial and material artefacts.”124 The digitization carried out for the Artworklife web site would fit the criteria of “critical digitization” as it also concentrated on what made the documents of the slide files unique to “maximize[s] interpretation and metadata” – this is also true of a small selection of sub-collections in the WAL including the “Mail Art” box and “Artists Books.” However, the methodology of the Slide Walk questions what kind

122 Ibid. p.288
124 See table in Appendices
of “depth” is achieved by critical digitization and as Dahlström et al. point out, the notion of a “critical” digitization suggests “expert” selection using the highest quality digitization, leading to the disadvantageous assumption that such projects produce “a ‘definitive’ digital representation, once and for all.” As the example of the artworklife pilot web site indicates, this sense of closure not only engenders a feeling of misrepresentation in living artists, it privileges the reproduction and preservation of the documentation over the artist’s practice.

The Slide Walk project produces new knowledge in the sense that critical digitization would be seen to do, but deliberately refrains from producing a sense of “definitiveness” making a “random” selection and representing no other authority than the artist’s over her slide. This is a research method developed to set digitization up as a research tool that opens the WAL slide collection to new perspectives and questions digitization’s good and bad reproduction and its role in creating new trajectories for women’s art practice.

**Conclusion**

My aim is to explore where the WAL slide collection was positioned by early digitization initiatives in the educational sector by reviewing the literature that was generated in anticipation as well as after the digitization of slide collections began. By analysing examples of digitized slide collections online this chapter considered issues of access and meaning-making in the networked environment. This leads the research to consider digitization in the context of a politics of reproduction that implicates cultural heritage and the assumptions about originality and value that digitization can bring into question. This moves the research towards a more detailed exploration of the reproductive practices that the WAL slide collection uniquely embodies, preserves and potentially performs that might be enabled or revealed through experiments in digitization.
CHAPTER TWO – Making New Knowledge Digitally: The Slide Walk

This chapter describes the practices that I began in 2012 to begin a process of recontextualizing the slide collection to investigate what the artist’s slide represents beyond artwork. Beginning with a digital photography project, the practice discovers the unique material properties of the WAL slide collection and explores digitization procedures, consequent performative image management tasks and material reenactments that produce new knowledge from the slides.

My research responds to the WAL slide collection as a feminist project and this research methodology reflects feminist research positions that value polyvocality and observing how culture is performed in the everyday. The cultural output that the WAL slide collection represents is particular in that the WAL artists' slides capture flows of artistic development as well as showcasing career achievements.

I titled the digital photography project leading the research practice Slide Walks, to signal that this was a performative practice devised to disrupt my habitual work routine with the WAL slide collection and gain a new vantage point over its extent. In this dissertation’s Introduction I explain how the methodology was developed as a disruptive artistic process to redefine my administrative work practices in the slide collection. While the subject of my research is the WAL slide collection, my priority was to unravel my habitual command of the collection to generate a new material relationship with the slide. It was crucial to implement a practice-based methodology that was led by the material of the artists’ slides rather than my familiarity with the slide collection’s content to gain a new appreciation of how and what the slides represent on behalf of the artists and their practices. Content was emphatically not the starting point for this research because the aim is to discover how the WAL slide collection might perform new knowledges beyond the documentation of artwork.
The Slide Walk is the tool I use to unpack the WAL slide collection to discover how knowledges enliven the slides. I wanted to respond to Michel Foucault’s description of knowledge systems that I encountered in Anne-Marie Mol’s praxiography\(^1\) and Jennifer Tennant Jackson’s essay on cultural analysis subtitled “We Just Do Not Know What We Are Talking About”\(^2\) exploring “the impact of the unknowable objects [. . .] upon what we can know.”\(^3\) Jackson introduced concepts Foucault developed in *Archaeology of Knowledge*\(^4\) and elsewhere\(^5\) that articulated my understanding of the artist’s slide as a statement or *énoncé* and the WAL slide collection as a discursive formation, or episteme that could be re-formed or formatted in the future as it is performed and consulted over time, without changing the slides as artists’ statements. As a French speaker, the word *énoncé* for me expresses an action – a placement in the world – that powerfully connects with how I understand the WAL slide collection and the unpacked single slide. Noortje Marres argues that the practice of re-formating becomes a means of increasing “resonance in political

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\(^3\) Ibid.p.158

\(^4\) Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2002).

circles and public spheres”⁶ and this notion of producing resonance suggests a renewed performativity as the possible consequence of digitizing the artist slide, when it is understood as a technology for political participation along with knowledge sharing.

**The Slide Walk as critical digitization**

The Slide Walk is a tool of ‘critical digitization’⁷ as described by co-authors Dahlström, Hansson, and Kjellman who combine their expertise in museums, libraries and archives to draw up a set of criteria for an approach to digitizing material that contrasts with processes of ‘mass digitization’. In doing so they observe how different digitization strategies reconfigure the material collections as institutions are responsible for producing meaning from their collections while it is also evident that digitization strategies in turn can redefine the focus of the institution. The notion of a ‘definitive’ digital representation is disallowed when it is recognized that an institution’s approach to digitization will vary according to the institution’s relationship with the object or collection to be digitized. Dahlström, et al. relate the case study of a national library’s careful, and expensive, digitization of a document regarded as a national treasure to show how the process of this document’s digitization demonstrates the institution’s role as a memory institution led into a trans-national setting of international standards of excellence. In contrast the Slide Walk and its iterations are informal and experimental in a localized setting, but this research practice aligns with the criteria for critical digitization outlined by Dahlström et al.⁸ Through a manual, partial process of digitization, the Slide Walk produces a less certain and unreliable version of the ways the WAL slide collection configures women’s art practice and questions how it secures a feminist framework alongside the prevailing use and production of digitized images of art.

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⁸ See Appendices for table of comparison
The Slide Walk begins as I take up a digital camera to make images of slides and initiate my research on “the distortion digitization brings about.” The performative aspect of making digital images from the artists’ slide files treats the slide files “as graphical, spatial and material artefacts” to discover the collective dynamic of the WAL slides to “maximize interpretation and metadata” and produce new knowledge adding depth to our understanding of the collection.

The Slide Walk is a deliberately provocative version of digitization that assists the research to challenge how the institution reproduces the Women’s Art Library slide collection as an archive. It is a critical digitization that resists professional standards and fails them in order to reveal new meanings in the textures of both analogue and digital reproduction that help us recognize this collection of women artists’ slides as a performative feminist project.

Figure 2 Tables from Mats Dahlström, Joacim Hansson, and Ulrika Kjellman, “‘As We May Digitize’ — Institutions and Documents Reconfigured,” LIBER Quarterly 21, no. 3–4 (April 11, 2012): 455
The Slide Walk starting point

The Slide Walk is a photographic method of research that shifts the process of digitization from working at a scanner to digitally photographing slide files laid out on a light table. The performative aspect of the Slide Walks is a research ‘intervention’ that generates new approaches to discovering knowledge in the WAL slide collection, leading me to produce, for example, videorecordings of computer screen-based work and a set of screen-prints in response to the research.

The Slide Walks provided the “liberating mobility” Dwight Conquergood describes as necessary to connect the dynamic of the multitude of practices that constitute a functioning slide library from locating and retrieving images, creating photographic records to maintaining a system in line with current technology that delivers images to end users. The Slide Walk works ‘against the grain’ of usual practices of scanning to focus on readings related to film, visual anthropology and other practices outside of archival and records management. This frees the research to contextualize the slide within the politics of visuality, which we can now see formed the collection and consider how digital migration might change what the slide collection can politically embody in the present. The methodology is an experiment that revives the material of the slide in my role as a curator of the collection working towards reimagining the present slide collection uniquely contributing to the ongoing politics of visuality for women artists.

The Slide Walks share features with the mobile methodology practised by the visual anthropologist, Sarah Pink. Her use of video recording and walking similarly informs her field work "through an embodied and sensory engagement with the practices and places of those people and things we are doing research with." The Slide Walk produces new knowledge by staying focused on the extent of the collection to detect the range of practices that are accessible through it. What do women artists

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communicate through the slides they sent to the WAL slide collection? Although the photographs produce rich detail that warrant close reading, the purpose of the movement and visual recording was to discover what the collection articulates on behalf of the artists who created it.

The Walks succeed in inducing a productive wider focus and shifting me from the position of curator/manager to approach the collection "from a position of solidarity"\(^{11}\) using a camera as a way of revisiting the process of making slides which I had done many times. Unlike Pink I did not choose to video my walks. Instead movement is recorded in sequences of stills unevenly focused and framed and identified or titled by the time recorded by the camera and automatically attached to the JPEG as metadata.

![Figure 3 Screen shot showing selection of JPEGs from Slide Walk 11 May 2013 with single JPEG highlighted to show the camera-generated meta data fields and information](image)

The Slide Walks produce intimate encounters with each slide to widen the experience of the collection as a powerfully affective assertion of visibility for women’s art practice.

The Slide Walk shows the mounted slide stored in its slide file pocket privileging the non-hierarchical arrangement of the slide collection that assigns equal significance to all self-identified art practices. Digitally photographing the slides embedded in their artists’ files, what becomes digitized? The Slide Walks bring the collected slide into full view, as a convergence of practices that highlights how the slide has always been a performative object, demanding to be handled to reveal its image. Will these digital photographic files become an extension of the slide collection or its surrogate? Or will they enact something altogether different, an enriched set of affinities, a feminist poetics of digitization?

The original contribution to knowledge being developed through the Slide Walk re-evaluates how the digital image might relate or produce a culturally productive relationship between the analogue and the digital, which depends less on a one-to-one correlation to an existing physical original than on becoming a process of “critical digitization” which “critically recognizes the distortion digitization brings about.”

The aberrant digitization begun by the Slide Walks show the slide mounts as live

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12 Dahlström, Hansson, and Kjellman, “‘As We May Digitize’ — Institutions and Documents Reconfigured.”
surfaces of inscription interacting with the images, the artworks and each other. I extended this exploration to focus on the inscriptions by experimenting with different presentation practices playing with the materiality and performativity of the artists’ writing. This included producing a screen-print materialized version of the Slide Walk image (“Slide Walk 11 May 2013 15:46”) that crudely isolated the handwritten information on the slide mount.

Figure 5 Slide Walk 11 May 2013 15:46
Figure 6 Three colour screen print based on Slide Walk 11 May 2013 15:46

Figure 7 Acetate positive used to position screen to print text
The analogue print was preceded by a series of experiments using Adobe Photoshop CC to adjust the image levels and use background fills to heighten the characteristics of the inscribed slide mount including subtleties like the heaviness of ink and overwriting.  

![Figure 8 Images from Slide Walk 11 May 2013 modified in Photoshop to extract photographic transparencies](image)

The Slide Walk's digital method effectively embodies the slide in its mount shifting the emphasis of the slide collection from its images to show this hitherto culturally undervalued slide mount. This blank frame part of the slide is prepared for distribution and becomes a vital site of inscription enabling the artist to participate in

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13 see Appendices Folder “No_art_11 May_slides”
a network of practices of sharing, archiving and connection.

At the same time this is a method that registers the digitizer/photographer’s inconsistency as the result of a photographic technique that seizes images rather than carefully sets them up, to re-present an experience of the slide collection as something new and promiscuous.

During a Slide Walk photographs are taken of slides in their randomly selected files in quick succession as the pace is set by time constraints and energy for discovering and recording multitudes of practices. The process engenders a sense of probing the collection to gain at best “a textural understanding” of it in the way described by Kirsten Boehner, William Gaver and Andy Boucher who framed questionnaires to “probe” rather than survey the community they were designing for, because
understanding the “fabric of place” better informed their work.\textsuperscript{14} The Slide Walk’s incompleteness thus produces a sense of the whole collection by ‘probing’ and turning up the inscribed slide mounts as new material for rethinking the collection as a fabric or networked entity.

My original ambition was to use the Slide Walk’s relative speed to photograph every contemporary artist’s slide in the collection. However, this ambition changed as I began to question the validity of producing a digital panoptical exposure of the collection. Instead, the theoretical readings looking at epistemology and archives that underpin this dissertation showed how the Slide Walks usefully engaged with the collection like an archaeological tool.

By bringing the slide mounts into view, the Slide Walk image evokes the maker who held and wrote on the slide, documenting how the 35mm slide is set apart from other photographic forms through being inscribed. It becomes possible to appreciate how different temporalities come into play as part of the transformation brought about by inscription as Jacques Derrida’s reflections on the autographed photographic portrait explain.

Figure 12 Slide Walk 26 July 2012, 15:15:54

Figure 13 Slide Walk 4 August 2012 12:41:48
For Derrida the inscribed photograph becomes more than a reproduced double (or the slide amongst many slides). It stands out as a singular being-in-the-world "Dasein" that "is there, that has a world, that is in the world, in the Erschlossenheit (disclosedness) that opens the world."\textsuperscript{15} While the photographs Derrida discussed were signed portraits given as mementos, the observation that inscription initiates disclosure resonates with the slides whose hand-labelled mounts bring the artist into the space of the photographic object. The photographic is changed from pure record to being "contaminated by invention in the sense of production, creating, productive imagination."\textsuperscript{16} The digitization performed by the Slide Walk photographs, mementoes of my encounters in the slide collection, are as contaminated with the sense of production. In addition to the way the Slide Walk photograph is not only redolent with the presence of whoever holds the camera and arranges the slides, it introduces the slide maker along with her images, disclosing the slide collection as a ‘world’ of women's art practice ‘invented' by the practice research photographs.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. \textit{p.42}
Derrida suggests invention "lies at the heart of photography ... because it seems to belong to a previous and internal time, to a private space or to a space that is not yet public," and this sense of 'internal time' and the space that is not, but intended to be public, evokes the multiple states of presentation that the slides embody. The slides were sent to a collection to be held secure and viewed in a public space. The promise of a public that the slide embodies, as a photographic object designed for projection, is at the beginning and the end of a process of many steps, from securing a camera to finally labelling the mounts.

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18 Ibid.p.54
The Slide Walk unpacks the contents of the slide files, browsing a public collection that is now stored with limited access in a climate controlled storage. The Slide Walk photograph is reconnecting with the promise of a public that the slide embodies, but exposes the slide work, the various ‘contaminations’ or moments of productive
imagination, that become digitized along with the image of the WAL slide’s artwork.

Figure 20  Slide Walk 04 August 2012, 12:39:44

Figure 21  Slide Walk 04 August 2012, 12:39:30

Figure 22  Slide Walk 04 August 2012, 12:25:22
The Slide Walk photograph contaminates the digitization of the slide collection with the “sense of production” and reveals both digitization and slidemaking as a decision to photograph where “this act of recording is not a passive act but rather one that arises out of an elaboration of material.”\(^{19}\) The slide was integral to the artist's professional self-promotion elaborating the material of the artist's practice. The initial impression an artist makes with her slide file in the WAL slide collection is through the presentation and her engagement with the slide – the more slides, the more elaborate or developed and sophisticated this practice appears to be.

But the contamination that the Slide Walk introduces also interferes with the artist’s original intention for the slide to represent her artwork and raise its profile in a public space. While this research is responding to the fact that slides have largely lost their technical capacity to project images and promote artwork, it also addresses the slides’ reliance on digitization to regain that capacity. Artists currently practicing will have made the adjustment to digital image making, but the problem of visibility for the WAL artists is perceived to be compounded by the technology of the slide becoming obsolete. I am conscious of producing imperfect images of artists’ slides that diminish the way the artist expected her artwork to be central to the slide’s importance. However, this research focuses on the materiality of the WAL slide collection to introduce new terms of reference for a politics of visuality that retrieves the

\(^{19}\) Ibid.p.10
individual’s efforts at self-promotion to rewrite how the WAL slide collection represents women’s art practices collectively and inexhaustibly.

The Slide Walk practice elaborates the material of the slide collection by drawing the material into the digital environment towards different modes of engagement. I was compelled to explore how the images are managed and experienced within the space of a computer screen as this is increasingly a necessary workspace for artists as well as visual resource managers. And one important question was how to digitize the artist’s slide as a visibly embedded component of a collection. This question led me towards video recording several digital processing actions that play out the shift from being a material slide in a hanging file to performing as a digital file. I was trying out processing actions that allowed the slide collections’ overall qualities such as density and numbers to surface.

The screenshot in figure 24 is from the only video that represents an entire Slide Walk. The session took place on 11 May 2013 lasting almost exactly two hours as recorded by the camera.

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20 See Accompanying Material or find at https://vimeo.com/113831600
The digital processing that is being recorded lasts just 4 minutes and 54 seconds. This is not a speeded-up slideshow, but an algorithmically controlled task completed without human intervention, blindly. I videoed this process as an attempt to see what emerges from the slide collection during this compressed replay of the Slide Walk. The flash of each slide is long enough to gain a sense of the quality of the photography and the slide mount labelling, producing a distinct impression of each artist’s file despite the fleeting glimpses of individual artworks.

The screenshot images shows the steps taken to convert the view of a Slide Walk image as it appears in the file folder into a MHT file. The screenshot thus does not become an image file but instead a web page archive file format that combines HTML code with images. When you click on a MHT file it generates the image
through Internet Explorer rather than an image viewing software like Microsoft Picture Editor or Paint, and thus conceptually places the file in a multimedia viewing platform. This esoteric technical variation on the digitally imaged slide raises the question of how the ‘message’ of a politically formed slide collection might be digitally muddied by technology.

This image freeze-frames the moment during the conversion of a screenshot of a Slide Walk folder being viewed with Windows Explorer where I have mistakenly double-clicked on a thumbnail image that consequently opens the Photoshop programme and interrupts the manual processing. I am recorded for 2 minutes and 23 seconds and managed to process 5 images during that time.\textsuperscript{21} This contrasts somewhat with the 225 images processed over in 4 minutes and 54 seconds by the automated batch process recorded in the earlier video.

\textsuperscript{21} For video see Accompanying Material or https://vimeo.com/113079133
These creative digital visualizations reproduce the artists’ slides as collections animated by different actions that convey the volatility of contexts and the variability of meanings generated by moving through groups of images. For example the looped GIF file that shows 15 Slide Walk images in less than a minute reproduces the slides as markers recording the shifting position of the camera as it collected images from the slide files.\textsuperscript{22} The excruciatingly slow video recording my screen-based task of processing screen shots into MHT files reproduces the time investment and monotony of image collection management. As an antidote to this immaterial production I printed out digital images onto blank business cards to produce a crude flipbook equivalent to the GIF depicting 5 slides across 50 pages. This fits neatly in a slide box recycled from the Women’s Art Library receipt of slides from Cecile Elstein in 1999, bound together with a bulldog clip used in the office of the WAL organization to secure scrap paper. This unique assemblage contrasts with the easy replication and distribution of the digital visualizations of the Slide Walk research, and as such produces a new embodiment from rather than for the slides.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{figure.png}
\caption{Screenshot of GIF featuring 15 Slide Walk images}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{22} See Appendices and https://media.giphy.com/media/Aiuoyn8E01CZG/giphy.gif
\textsuperscript{23} See Appendices for more detailed documentation on the flipbook.
Figure 29 “Stepping from a Slide Walk on a Saturday August 4 2012 at 12:02, 12:22, 12:31, 12:41” Flipbook in slide box

Figure 30 Stepping from a Slide Walk Flipbook open at Pauline Lucas
The Slide Walk became an “inventive method” in the sense that sociologists Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford suggest, because it produces new knowledge about the socio-cultural value of the WAL slide collection in a tangential way that supplements rather than depends on its art historical content. Approaching the slide collection as an entity I conceived the action of Slide Walking that combines the notion of walking or wandering through the collection with taking photographs of each slide that I come across. I was initially inspired by the writer Rebecca Solnit’s *Wanderlust: a history of walking* to consider the radical re-mapping capacity of walking as a way to reconceive the WAL slide collection as a research object, or territory. Walking is a research method practised not only by contemporary artists using walking as a space of knowledge sharing and producing new entry points to cultural heritage as well as critiques of what constitutes proper artistic output and notions of productivity. In the work of social and visual anthropology, walking is an established form of performative research articulated and visualized by Tim Ingold whose work on lines theorizes how movement and embodiment enriches knowledge about our relationship

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25 Ibid.
26 *Walking, Writing and Performance: Autobiographical Texts / by Deirdre Heddon, Carl Lavery and Phil Smith ; Edited by Roberta Mock. (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2009); Phil Smith and Crab Man, Counter-Tourism: A Pocketbook : 50 Odd Things to Do in a Heritage Site (and Other Places), 2012.*
27 An example would be the work of Francis Alÿs who has used travel as well as unproductive actions such as children’s games to reposition ideas of cultural worth.
with material and space. My starting point was to determine how to produce new knowledge reappraising the WAL slide collection as a unique cultural unit. The Slide Walk’s combination of thinking and performative action was exactly what I felt I needed to begin this reappraisal and negotiate the expanse of the collection rather than extract samples. I had observed how the London International Festival of Theatre, whose archive was deposited in the Special Collections in Goldsmiths in 2009, invited individuals with a particular knowledge of the work of LIFT to identify materials in the archives to create ‘trails’ of discovery in the digitized version that would go online. Successfully completed in 2010, the concept that trail-making activates an archive into something ‘living’ impressed me with its simplicity and the way that it mirrored my own practice retrieving extra unrequested material from the WAL when assisting users’ research. My daily work practice as the collection’s curator is shaped by the assumption that most of the WAL collection needs to be discovered as well as consulted and that my role as a curator/custodian is to bring as many artists into views as possible. The WAL slides intimate the subtle movement between women artists’ work practices, political awareness and personal political spaces. Articulating these shifts is critical to understanding how feminism is an enacted practice, and to understand how the Slide Walks draw attention to politicized practice in the WAL slide collection, I have found the work of visual anthropologist Sarah Pink secures a theoretical basis. Pink’s use of video walking as a research method resonates especially with the Slide Walk, with a camera pointing down and tracing movement to produce new knowledge through what she calls a “sensory ethnography.” Her work acknowledges how knowledge is shared and gained as an embodied experience and this not only resonates with the Slide Walk but encouraged the computer screen video recordings, projections and experimental printing and writing that followed. However, the process of creating new knowledge from the WAL slide collection began with the Slide Walks’ multi-sensorial approach, physically working with the images and photographing each slide as a direct ‘route’ to the artist’s studio. Sarah Pink’s description of an interview enhanced by a box of

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photographs explains how this engagement with the materiality of the artists’ slide files is powerfully productive. Pink’s account tells how the box of photographs enabled the researcher to find "a route to her [informant's] past through images"\footnote{Ibid.} not because the images directly related to what they were discussing, but because for both participants in the exchange, the photographs enhanced what she describes as “the sensory dimension of the interview”:

A mere tape recording of her speaking in a formalised interview could not have conjured up the greater sense of her past which we mutually created with the aid of visual images.\footnote{Ibid. p.87 Judith Okely 1994: 45}

The Slide Walks approach the collection using arbitrary starting points and undetermined time. Movement renders the Slide Walk into a replicable, performative model for consulting the collection to gain new knowledge from the slides. Improvisation gives space to be guided by the immersive quality of the expanse of slide files rather than a plan to create order from the slide collection.

It is how Pink describes video recordings as “other people’s lines”\footnote{Sarah Pink, “Drawing with Our Feet (and Trampling the Maps): Walking with Video as a Graphic Anthropology,” in Redrawing Anthropology (Ashgate, n.d.).p154} that can be followed as a shared experience that permit me to view recordings of banal on-screen actions and photographs of slides as lines of enquiry. This mobile engagement is an embodied understanding of the slide collection as a site or "environmental configuration" co-constituted by women artists' everyday art practices – including representing their artworks – combined with feminist activism. It also understands this configuration – the WAL slide collection – as a place of making meaning, so that what a slide "does" is recognized as multi-layered, relational, and shifting. The artist’s slide is ordered into slide files to become part of a navigable system and preserved intact as the artist’s communicative material. The slide collection is built from this connective work and participation to enact change in civil society, i.e. socio-cultural change for women.

The Slide Walks assist the research to consider the slides as communications from the
flow of the 'everyday' of art practice. As Pink describes, to scrutinize the “everyday life or activism” is to work “through its unevenness” to “arrive at intersections where meanings are made.”34 My Slide Walk practice begins a process of scrutinizing the WAL artist’s slide file through the unevenness of photography and digitization to produce a "route to knowing" how the slide represents the artist’s everyday as feminist work.

The everyday is where we live our lives. It is subsequently a site from which research, activism and intervention emerge and are increasingly combined in new ways as engaged scholars become implicated in projects that seek to bring about changes. Yet we cannot directly capture its constant flow. […] broadly this might involve choices between treating the everyday as data, as representation or as a route to knowing.35

The Slide Walks do not result in a digital record of every slide in the collection. I chose to record my engagement with the sections of the collection I ‘walked’ by creating a photographic still rather than filming. The pace of the Slide Walk is quotidian and interrupted, rather than fluent, as I pause to gaze at the individual slide and observe the extent of detailed labour that has gone into making each slide. My research methodology begins with disrupting my routine custodial relationship with the collection, but remains firmly situated within the limits of my workplace – the Library’s Special Collections and Archives at Goldsmiths – using the available software resources and the limits of my technological expertise. The basic equipment of a camera and light table situates the digitization process away from the hubris of cutting edge technology and large scale research. Nevertheless, the Slide Walk image is a form of digital data that can function in any form of digital network space. In terms of developments in museum display technologies from Augmented Reality projects such as the Temporary Stedelijka to projected metadata installations like

34 Pink, Situating Everyday Life. p.34
35 Ibid.
Carl Emil Carlsen’s *Metaview* the possibilities are inspiring.

**The Slide as Digital Object: thinking of display**

At an earlier stage in this research I attended a number of seminars and events showcasing 3D and mobile imaging processes to discover whether other digital applications besides scanning might be applied to the 35mm slide. It became apparent that 3D imaging technology was a means of digitally enhancing an understanding of surface and the technology could not render the transparency in the mounted slide in any way that made it digitally accessible. Mobile technologies such as Augmented Reality applications, suggested how digitization might shift the slide from projection in the dark into the environment of public display through the use of smartphones. To further my research, I made two separate proposals to explore the possibility of using digital visualization of the slide collection in museum display. While neither proposal was successful they introduced the concept of museum engagement to the research practice exploring different environments in which to experience a digitized artist’s slide. The first proposal sought to work with the Smithsonian Artists Archives to devise an Augmented Reality app with the Mobile unit of the Smithsonian to introduce digitized women artists’ slides from the Special Collections into the museum display area. The second was to attend a Getty summer institute inviting arts professionals to Harvard’s metaLAB to:

be introduced to concepts and skills necessary to make use of open collections to develop art-historical storytelling through data visualization, interactive media, enhanced curatorial description and

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exhibition practice, digital publication, and data-driven, object-oriented teaching.\textsuperscript{41}

My aim was to work with technical experts to explore

the possibility of how the materiality of a slide collection might be
brought into play by a hybrid approach to digitization […] and identify
an approach towards visualising or exhibiting digital data that enables
the collection to narrate the stories of unrecognized but very
recognizable art practices.\textsuperscript{42}

The applications assisted the research by focusing on the WAL slide as a potential
digital object that is activated by different presentation platforms to perform in
different settings and present women’s art practices in new spaces.

Dr. Ana-Maria Herman developed the Women’s Art Library smartphone “app” in
2016.\textsuperscript{43} a project aimed at showcasing examples of artists in the WAL slide collection
in a digital format that enables “the archive to travel” and test “the possibilities
and limitations of feminist interventions that employ app technologies through the
case study of the WAL App.”\textsuperscript{44} I assisted in conceiving how the ‘archive’, e.g. the
WAL slide collection, was represented through the trope of the mounted slide to
distinguish artwork produced earlier in the artists’ careers and reflect the “archive”
that is beginning to travel, in other words, the WAL slide collection. During the
process of producing images for the WAL App I photographed a number of slides by
modifying the Slide Walk method to use a copy stand to produce maximum clear
focus, side lighting and worked on a lightbox photographing just one slide at a time


\textsuperscript{42} Excerpt from application to “Beautiful Data: Telling Stories About Art with Open Collections A summer workshop supported by the Getty Foundation, taking place between June 16–June 27, 2014.”

\textsuperscript{43} Ana-Maria Herman, “How to Make an Archive Travel? A Project at the Women’s Art Library (Goldsmiths Library) and CISP (Sociology Department, Goldsmiths, University of London),” Wordpess, The WAL App, (2016), https://howtomakeanarchivetravel.wordpress.com/.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
for each artist. The remaining images of more recent work were all JPEGs.

The slide mount itself becomes the symbol of the artists’ means of participation which Herman went on to develop as the icon for a participating function whereby artists can upload images of their work using their device’s camera viewfinder framed by a Women’s Art Library slide mount.\footnote{Ibid.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Mounted slide photographed to represent archived artwork of Marcia Bennett-Male in the WAL app as viewed on an IPad Air}
\end{figure}
Figure 33 View of WAL App "Participate" function on an IPad Air
The WAL App is a pilot project that broadly relates to the web site pilot project Artworklife discussed in the Introduction in the way it necessitated digitizing slides although the scale of digitization that I needed to perform was much more extensive for Artworklife: 1200 slides were digitized as opposed to 7 for the WAL App. The contrast between both projects’ digitization procedures can roughly be aligned along the distinctions between “critical” and “mass” digitization cited earlier, as I individually set up and photographed the slides for the WAL App and I simply cleaned and scanned the 1200 slides for the Artworklife image database that became the content for the web site. Herman’s careful and detailed approach to creating content for the WAL App implemented a “well informed selective analysis of source copies” (a feature of “critical” digitization) by working to the theme of “magic realism” and carefully choosing artists with current practices to work directly with the artist to maximize “interpretation and metadata.” In contrast, Artworklife chose a representative section of the WAL slide collection and arranged the scans alongside

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found documentation and minimized interpretation. However, Artworklife’s random sourcing of slide files and lack of interpretative text alongside the digitized papers and slide images, were intended to reproduce the exploratory experience of browsing the WAL slide collection as a digitized collection online.47 Rosamund Davies, the principal investigator for Artworklife, had identified “common, regular, foreseeable traits” (features that Dahlstrom et al. identify with “mass digitization”) in the WAL artists’ slidefiles that distilled into the concept of these artists’ practices merging “artworklife.”48

While the scans made for Artworklife reproduced artists’ slide files in full, the images did not record the artist’s bond with her file with the same visual intensity that the scans of papers and handwritten statements did. The materiality of the slide was missing from the digitized picture, because standard slide scanners such as the Nikon Super Coolscan 5000 ED Film scanner (35 mm) that I used, cannot record the slides’ mounts and this has never been perceived an issue with regard to the WAL slide collection until I initiated this research. I would argue that despite the large number of slides scanned, the nature of the WAL slide collection – its purpose and physical extent – remained equally indiscernible. Scanning separates images from their mounts, hiding its fundamental design as an image carrier. The importance of the slide mount as part of the cultural heritage of the WAL slide collection is thus highlighted by its absence. The experience of scanning WAL artists’ slides on this scale evidenced the shortfalls of digitizing the slides solely in order to use its images digitally. The WAL slide collection clearly presents a challenge to standard digitization processes and for this reason framing photography as digitization was the beginning of this research reappraising what is most culturally significant about the WAL slides.

The Slide Walks prompt a re-thinking of what practices shape the slide collection and how that might be represented digitally. As the Slide Walk refocuses digital capture from artwork to slide mount, it emphasizes the labour of slide-making and distribution. While it is not within the scope of this research to determine each

48 Davies, “ARTWORKLIFE.”
individual’s reason for submitting slides, the WAL slide collection is a clearly expresses a range of desires on behalf of the artists to be discovered and culturally recognized. Expectations around the WAL slide collection moved between its claims to be a marketing tool working as a picture resource and the feminist educational resource that the slides became. The feminist project was based on recognizing the politics of not only visuaity but in terms of visibility experienced in any aspect of the professional and personal life of a woman artist. Intentions that produced an educational slide resource and support it as socially and culturally vital to civil society. I would argue that the WAL represented a way for women to act on issues that were socially and culturally affecting their ability to participate fully in culture or civil society. This suggests that the WAL slide collection enabled women artists to engage in what Marres describes as civil society practices.

As regards civil society practices, a wide variety of terms is used to load meaning into these networking activities, with "building partnerships" and "awareness raising" on one end of the spectrum, and "making friends" and "sharing knowledge" on the other."

Looking across the slide collection as a collection of practices suggests that when an artist submitted her slides she was participating in a civil society action to build a feminist cultural project in addition to fulfilling her personal motivations to self-identify as an art practitioner.

The Slide Walk re-frames the WAL slide collection by including the mount and this widening of focus is key to this research’s critique, because it demonstrates how the materiality of the 35mm slide is edited to accommodate its use for reproducing art, rather than its capacity to be collected into an evidential commentary on how art should be reproduced to include women.

Using a slide scanner to digitize a slide collection privileges the transparency as classifiable image, and renders the slide mount as an inconsequential surface with notation that may or may not be digitally recorded to become searchable text as image files of transparencies and text files of notation are input into a system of

retrieval. The experience of content is dictated by the effectiveness of the search engine and the search terms. Kate Eichhorn's study on the cataloguing of collections of Grrrl zines\textsuperscript{50} highlights the critical importance of the cataloguer's description which not only shapes the local catalogue through controlled vocabulary, but also populates globally shared records through the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), effectively creating a rhetorical space that recognizes these works as feminist cultural production. The digitization of the WAL slide collection is not just a breakdown of photographic documentation into electronic elements for digital preservation, but also for inclusion in an institutional retrieval system of knowledge that it simultaneously challenges. The electronic constitution of the WAL slide collection that the Slide Walks produce: images of slides in their files taken in long sequences to show artists organized in a continuum, visually reference the collection, but how might a digitized retrieval system describe the collection in a way that is so generic to the ‘women’s movement’ that it ends up on what Emily Drabinski describes as the "gendered s(h)elves".\textsuperscript{51}

The WAL slide collection is broadly described in the library catalogue of the library at Goldsmiths, and the artists are named in the archive and textile catalogue, but the slides remain uncatalogued and there is no reflection in either retrieval system of the vocabulary or terms that the artists themselves might use to describe the artwork they have chosen to represent their practices. There are no terms of 'subject agency' as outlined in Judith Baxter's work on feminist poststructural discourse analysis\textsuperscript{52} which usefully suggests how women can be powerful and powerless as enactors of discourse "multiply positioned in terms of their agency to adapt to, negotiate or resist dominant subject positions, or alternatively, take up subject positions within a resistant discourse."\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Kate Eichhorn, \textit{The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order} / Kate Eichhorn. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).


The designation as the Women's Art Library Collection reinforces these artists' gender distinction within the Library, situating them in a "Special Collection" as opposed to or in addition to the "Main Collection", as their slides can only represent historical aspects of their practices, at the core of a past feminist political artists’ project.

The dissolution of my official administration practices through the methodology of the Slide Walks enables me to approach the research with a sense of creative empowerment. The Slide Walks effectively gender digitization by providing what Baxter describes as "the opportunity to focus on the female subject, her voice, her position of power".54 The artist slide file persists, even in the context of an institute of higher education, as a site where the artist asserts her identity and positions herself as a practitioner. The collection's extensive holdings of slide files sets up a feminist poststructural position i.e. "the opportunity to consider women, not as persistently oppressed, victims of male oppression."55 Baxter’s feminist poststructuralism is an enacted position suggesting how the WAL slide collection functions, not as a historical footnote to a larger collection, but "by centralising her subjectivity [as I would 'centralise' these artists' slide files] as a site contested in discourse [...] positioned in a fluid, dynamic, contextual relation with competing constructs of identity."56

The gendering of these artists’ (s)elves of selves was instigated by artists outside the institution in response to the artworld, but when they were relocated to Goldsmiths’ Library, these selves became part of a collection identified with historical feminist positivism. The regenerative performance of the Slide Walks challenge this attempt at closure and approaches the WAL slide collection as an indefinite, ongoing discourse of artists’ “fluid, dynamic, contextual relation with competing constructs of identity” within this women-only space. Collected together as a challenge to the single authoritarian voice of the artworld of the 1960s-2000, the WAL slide collection creates a distinct "s(h)elf" with its own polyphonic momentum where practices are being seen to be asserted, maintained, defended or progressed. The artist membership

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
represented by the WAL slide collection sought transformative action as an issue network in the sense that they were united by a politics of visibility by their slide production and submissions to the WAL without needing to share any other commonalities of practice. Like the transformative action suggested by Baxter's FPDA this work of creating a slide collection is not about displacing one discourse with another – e.g. replacing the art world with a women-only “cultural invention” – so much as enabling a negotiated space to speak for oneself where "unusual combinations of ideas and more thought-provoking if more disruptive insights [...] lead to [transformative] action."57

57 Ibid.
Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia, Baxter reasons that the space that gives voice to the marginalised silent is a space that brings 'hidden knowledges' into view. Certainly, the Slide Walk reframes the slide collection by highlighting the rich disparity and discourse of the slide mounts, which suggests a politics of representation that is not visual alone, but multi-dimensional and transformed by the success of the evidence-gathering which brought thousands of slides into this rhetorical space. Adopting Bakhtin's move "to foreground not the political or economic, but the linguistic dimension of social struggle" my practice research also explores how the slide mounts might perform on behalf of the artist by creating an interactive reading with slide mounts alone. The aim of this exercise was to isolate the text from the artwork and the handiwork of the artist and perform a reading of the text as a homage to Gertrude Stein’s poetry collection *Tender Buttons*. Names and other inscriptions from the slides’ mounts, including the ‘red dot’ and number if they were there, were written in pencil on unused slide mounts.

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58 Ibid.
59 See Appendices for full text.
The Box featured in several presentations featuring projections of the Slide Walk images and in discussions about how my research is grounded in the physical properties of the slide collection. One of these important characteristics is the way it is organized by the artists’ surnames, preserving how the slides arrived with paper documentation directly from the artists. Baxter's analysis suggests how reproducing the WAL slide collection’s heteroglossia is a feminist methodology that shows how the dominant discourse is challenged by the woman artist who resists the silencing of
her practice through slidemaking.

The Slide Walks picture slides as a personalized information communication technology produced with varied degrees of professionalism and styles of presentation representing the individual artist’s proficiency in ’speaking’ for oneself; persuading, taking command, deploying subtlety or boldness.

Figure 40 Slide Walk 21 July 2012 13:10:14

Figure 41 Slide Walk 21 July 2012 13:02:20
The mimetic, immersive approach of the Slide Walk, reproducing the photographic labour of the artists – in a sense following in their footsteps – is a way for me to become a feminist researcher, engaged in a practical reworking, that enables me to recast the WAL slide collection as a space of cultural exchange. I photograph photographs of artwork that will become part of the WAL collection as an additional insight and this is a feminist method of knowledge-making that the WAL slide collection encourages.

[. . .] readiness for a less defensive, more multifaceted and resilient version of feminism, that retains connections with its founding principles, yet is simultaneously capable of critiquing, informing and undermining itself with new insights and possibilities.”

The Slide Walks were initially conceived to record the WAL slide collection in its entirety starting with taking a Slide Walk twice a week. However, the numbers of digital images the Slide Walks produced quickly shifted the methodology from making photographs to confront issues of how to present even a single walk in its entirety and demonstrate research findings. In total 11 walks were taken between February 2012 and July 2013, and although these resulted in only 1543 image files, the volume of 5.688 Gigabytes of data presented significant difficulties for presenting the practice at the transfer to PhD. Yet I am reluctant to strip away what might be considered surplus data – to for instance concentrate on a sample from a Slide Walk, or a single Slide Walk chosen from a group – when it is the “surplus” as Gregory Sholette terms it, or “dark matter” that is the focus of this research. The Slide Walks were a way of discovering the ‘dark matter’ of rich material held on slide mounts that keep this unwieldy expanse in view.

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Space (digital storage capacity for the purposes of sharing) and time (to spend with) would restrict ways of understanding the dynamics of a collection of thousands of slides. The political purpose of this accumulation provides a framework for thinking how this digital mass of data might be a surplus that is transformative. Jacques Rancière’s exchange with Davide Panagia articulates a way of discerning socio-cultural power struggle through a “surplus of words”.61 While it is beyond the remit of this research to consider Rancière’s theory of a poetics of politics, it is useful to remark how his search through an archive of 19th century workers’ letters did not result in discovering a representative “mode of speaking” but an understanding of the political efficacy of the “unnecessary words, words that exceed the function of rigid designation” which can be proliferated to become words that represent the workers regardless of those who believe themselves to “speak correctly” and “the masters of designation and classification who, by virtue of wanting to retain their status and power, flat-out deny this capacity to speak.”62

62 Ibid.
Even though these workers had no capacity, according to Rancière, to "enter in political exchange," their letters form a resistance to dominant socio-historical discourse because of the ‘efficacy’ of the literary form. This regard for the abundance of workers’ letters as evidence of the efficacy of literary form, appeals to the notion that the WAL slide collection and other women artists slide registries show these women enhancing the efficacy of the artist’s slide to create a surplus that defies the idea of practicing art correctly. The WAL artists’ slides, like the workers’ letters, once described the women’s "common world" of contemporary art practice, but the form of the slide has become outmoded and suppressed by the technical changes in the "common world" of art documentation. As a method of research the Slide Walks initiate a process of releasing the slides "from the status that social or cultural history assigned to them" to borrow Rancière’s description of his work with the workers’ letters. The Slide Walks’ proliferation of images confirm the efficacy of the slide collection as a politicized transformation of the photographic art document. The Slide Walks are a process of photographic recording that is more aligned to the casual practice of taking research images on phones in archives than with the painstaking slide making undertaken by artists, or the construction of a slide collection.

Applying the research method of the Slide Walk highlights this important

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development of spontaneous photography that is becoming the common world of archives and unique collections as users also share these images digitally in an unauthorised and familiar way. The Slide Walk also highlights the WAL slide collection as a rich material collection whose surplus defies the classification and containment of these normative digital practices of distribution, as well as dominant discourses about what a valuable art practice is.

The Slide Walk is a genealogical research method in the sense that political theorist Wendy Brown describes. It is a means of discovering new knowledges in the WAL slide collection by inducing an ‘experiential shift’ that defamiliarizes the slide files. She describes it as a productive “vertigo” where

the knower, too, is cast into unfamiliarity with her – or himself. [...] as particular narratives and presumptions are upended and scrutinized for the interests they serve and the comfort they offer.64

The Slide Walk’s embodied knowledge-making merge the role of researcher with photographer and digitizer to produce a different authority through process and upending. Relinquishing the role of maintaining or imposing a stable legibility for the WAL collection as its curator, I activate a denaturalization that begins with taking photographs of the slides that merge traces of the slide maker and the artwork, text and image. The Slide Walk embodies the slide in a way that releases it from the

presumption that the primary cultural value of a slide of an artwork is the artwork it represents. As an authorized exponent of the collection, I challenge my own voice of authority by finding a different artistic voice to contribute to the multi-layered discourse these women artists produce through their slides.

The digital embodiment introduces the slide to a new digital materiality that can be reformed to not only refocus the slide’s communicative function from image to text, but also into a different sensory experience. Experimental reworkings such as the image below create a tension between the digital manipulations that prioritize inscription and the heightened tactility conveyed by the photograph. The image references all the elements of the WAL slide in its slide file, but through a reworking using Photoshop indicates the different materialities digitally captured, from inscription to granular inconsistencies of the digital image’s rendering of a smooth plastic slide mount, to the reflective surface of the polyester slide file picking up the glare of the room’s overhead lighting to the slide’s transparency that suspends the image of the artwork over the lightbox’s more uniform light.

![Figure 48 Image from Slide Walk 11 May 2013 modified in Photoshop](image)

These Slide Walk digital image experiments explored the relationship between the traces of an artist’s descriptive inscription and the image it supports. This relationship between the handwritten and the archiving image can be intensified and expanded by digital imaging software that enables the capacity for image manipulation and renews the possibility to project these images in the absence of Kodak slide projectors and the analogue technology of film. In thinking about how slides represent artists, it is
consistent across both analogue and digital spaces that the first impression each slide makes is against a light source.

Figure 49 Detail of the lightbox (turned on) used in the Special Collections and Archives dedicated study space at Goldsmiths. This lightbox came with the WAL collection when it was relocated.

The slides are serial, juxtaposed, annotated and miniature, producing a space of thinking through images. As can be seen in Susan Skingle’s farewell installation of the teaching slide collection at London Metropolitan University, and Caroline Evans and Alistair O’Neil’s installation at Central Saint Martins, the material of slide collections would be activated across the working surface of light.

65 “Doubles, duplicity and duplication” installation (March 2013) Lethaby Gallery, Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design
Based on their research in fashion history, Professor Caroline Evans and Alistair O’Neill selected a series of slide images that reflected on the relationship of copy and original in fashion.
Figure 50 Into Obscurity: exhibiting the slide collection, Susan Skingle (June 2013) The CASS Gallery Space, London Metropolitan University Library

Figure 51 Into Obscurity: exhibiting the slide collection, Susan Skingle (June 2013) The CASS Gallery Space, London Metropolitan University Library
The Slide Walks also used the light table, but as 'walks' they are defined by time and movement and the merging of artist’s and photographer’s deviations from consistency.
My focus stayed on process and improvisation and how digitization is a process of visualizing material. Although my physical movement was not strictly ambulatory, I describe this photographic approach as ‘walks’ to highlight the importance of constantly shifting focus from slide to slide and moving through the collection. The Slide Walk produces digital image files of static slides while registering the wavering of a handheld camera moving across a flat file. As the photographer I work against the strong artificial lighting in the room, producing mismatched colour images, while concentrating on the rhythm of taking photographs in succession, simply loading the camera with image after image.
I began without knowing how I would interpret this way of looking at the WAL slides and all the data that I was producing. The first two walks combined photographing with making digital handwritten fieldnotes to enrich the data, but this resulted in writing that traced “auto-ethnographic encounters with affective landscapes”66 that, in other words, reinforced personal recollections about the files, artists and artworks. I wanted the Slide Walks to defamiliarize the collection to question what the WAL slide collection became through this process of digital recording. The notion of walking was key to this research because it structured my digital photographic recording as a spontaneous exploratory, knowledge-seeking interaction with the slide files.

Figure 54 Notes written on digitally legible Livescribe notebook

Restricting my ‘walking’ to photography produced ‘strings’ of digital images in the sense that Ingold describes, as I trace paths through the collection that “does not so much add another figurative layer to the ground surface as weave another strand of movement into it.”67

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I argue that this photographic work is a method of digitization that adds movement to the slide files by activating and transposing whole sections of the collection to become a digital ‘ground surface’ rather than isolating artists and their artworks to be scanned and re-filed without a sense of what connects them.
From analogue to digital, what is reproduced? The performative intention

The movement and imperfections of the Slide Walk images might exaggerate the shift between analogue and digital photographic objects, but Geoffrey Batchen’s discussion of photographic and digital reproduction in his essay "Photogenics" reflects on how the electronic image fails to reproduce the photograph it replicates. Batchen notes that no matter how precisely a digital reproduction of Ansel Adams’s iconic photograph, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico* is rendered, the digital surrogate of a photograph can only clone a single print. This "sequence of digital codes" does not reproduce the photograph in the important sense that Adams did; he made many distinct prints from the photographic negative. Instead of reproducing a photograph Batchen suggests that this digital version is "no longer distinguishable from that of any other piece of datum […] All that matters (in every sense of the word) is the possibility of the instant dissemination and exact reproduction of data."

This observation regarding the precise digital replica suggests how the imperfect Slide Walk photograph differs from a scan not only in the performative way it shifts the slide from analogue to digital 'matter' as a photographer’s encounter, but also in the way it exposes and embraces the fact of its own making, in a similar way that Adams visibly worked differently on each print he made of *Moonrise*.

My inconsistent way of working the camera becomes especially evident in the Slide Walk images when they are viewed in a quickened sequence as they are in the GIF described earlier. The Slide Walk photograph is a digital reproduction that betrays the presence of the photographer. Does this diminish the premise that the Slide Walk performs a kind of digitization of the slide files producing research data? What is digitally reproduced by this research method?

Batchen’s study of Anna Atkins’ cyanotype photograms describes how her

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69 Ibid.p.155
enchanting but scientifically driven image reproductions trace Atkins’ physical process in a similar way. Atkins made multiple prints using a plant specimen rather than making a reproducible representative image. This use of an 'original' plant assured Atkins that the image was rich in relevant data that mitigated against loss through being printed.

[. . .] So each page always contains the same basic visual information but always with slight variations in the arrangement of that information between each edition, as befits a hand-made contact print. [. . .] Atkins presents her images as data, as precisely repeated, invariably differentiated information derived from a common master code and disseminated in image form.\textsuperscript{70}

The Slide Walk photographs’ digitization renders slides into distributable data through a photographic approach that treats the camera as a knowing eye focusing exclusively on the artwork as the relevant data and indifferent to the conditions of light, tufts of grass or brick walls that produce an evocative temporality. We are meant to ignore everything else except the artwork.

\textbf{Figure 57} Slide Walk 09 June 2012, 11:25:50

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
Atkins's method of pressing her botanical specimen between sheets of glass, flipping images, exposing to light and creating a contact tracing on photosensitive paper, is a performance reminiscent of the digital imaging process of flatbed scanning. Equally, the way a flatbed scanner brings together an object and recordable light recalls the photogram, but when a slide is scanned in this way, the light passes mostly through the film transparency and the lingering spectre is not of a total entity; the image – the artwork – slips away.

In contrast to scanning, the Slide Walk photographs not only capture the slide in full but achieve an additional quality of tactility. The visual contact that the photograph establishes with each slide retains a sense of the wavering space between lens and object. Instead of submitting each slide to the steady exposure of a scanner’s beam, I am holding a camera and registering movement across the slide files to re-present several hundred images in a single "walk" intimating the richness of what may yet be seen.

![Figure 61 Slide Walk 09 June 2012, 11:27:18](image)

The uniqueness of each slide’s physical traits and situation that the Slide Walk recovers can be viewed as ‘contaminating’ the slide’s function as an information communication technology with peripheral detail. In addition to this, the Slide Walk image data also includes a recorded time which serves as its identifier. The Slide Walk image is distinct from the artist slide not simply because it is digital but
because it is identified as a recorded moment rather than as an act of reproduction. Nevertheless it is a digital record and an act of digitization.

Figure 62 Early membership form listing slides found in slide file Slide Walk 25 May 2013, 12:38:04

The awkward Slide Walk photograph re-presenting all these elements hardly sparkles with the "glitter of reproducibility" that Batchen sees overtaking the "aura of authenticity."

Figure 63 Slide Walk 21 April 2015, 10:33:00
Perhaps the Slide Walk photograph evokes a 'handmade' aesthetic instead, reflecting the approach of those more casual artists whose photographs made no attempt to situate their work in featureless settings with unobtrusive lighting.
But just as the slide files are distinguished by the many different ways artists left their marks on their slides, the streams of Slide Walk images also accumulate an aura of their own and inevitably begin to cohere into a different entity from the WAL slide collection. The result of this contaminated digitization can be interpreted as de-individuating the artist’s slide because the Slide Walk image disrupts the artist’s presentation of her work with a “singular approach/voice.” In that case what do the Slide Walks authenticate besides these passing encounters? The diversity of slidemaking practices constituting the WAL slide collection is confirmed by the Slide Walks’ digital imaging of the slide mounts as part of a feminist project of cultural reproduction. The Slide Walks produce a feminist methodology as well as new research material, producing new knowledges that are explored in the final chapter with reference to Athanasios Velios’ model of “creative archiving” and Dahlström et al.’s “critical digitization.” In addition to these comparisons and key to understanding insights brought to light by the Slide Walks is the notion of “site writing” as conceived by architectural theorist Jane Rendell and developed by poet and critical theorist Kristen Kreider to consider how the artists’ inscriptions are central to the ‘aura of authenticity’ that the Slide Walk images digitally imprint on to the WAL slide collection as a whole and how this contributes to reading the slides today.

71 I thank Felicity Allen for this observation.
73 Dahlström, Hansson, and Kjellman, “‘As We May Digitize’ — Institutions and Documents Reconfigured.”
When material becomes political

I got a tremendous education by handling almost every book. And when I filed stuff, I looked at it, and so I learnt a lot about contemporary art.  

This quote is from Lucy Lippard talking about how she worked in the library in MOMA in New York after a fire in 1958 left the library in disarray. What I find compelling is how she describes a process of absorbing life-changing knowledge from art books in a state of flux. She draws a “tremendous education” from this vulnerable but enduring material as she is filing it, securing it in a sequence on a shelf for future access. It is poignant to note how Lippard, a key figure using feminism as a critical tool for writing about art practices, regarded this moment of handling a mass of art documentation as pivotal. My research practice sets up the Slide Walk photograph to enact a similar experience of gaining knowledge through handling and reorganization, in this case producing digital images that perform what Ignaz Cassar eloquently describes all photographs do: “produce an impression (record) at the same time as providing an archival space (file) for the record it has created.”

74 Hans Ulrich Obrist and Lionel Bovier, A Brief History of Curating (Zurich; Dijon: JRP / Ringier; Les Presses du réel, 2008).
Photographic collections are significantly impacted by digitization programmes as archivist and historian, Joanna Sassoon describes, addressing issues raised by this research regarding what cultural meanings are changed, even lost when a photographic collection is digitized. Her concern with mass digitization is how this approaches collections’ content without taking into account the complexity of the photograph as “a finely tuned material equation between being a cultural and being a technological object.” This description – while not citing slides but prints – remains nevertheless an elegant definition of the 35mm slide. Like all those, including myself, who signed the Florence Declaration she is wary of how custodial institutions value original photographic archives post-digitization, and considers the impact of digitization to be far-reaching since "a technical transformation from the material to the digital should in fact be seen as a cultural process".

How does the Slide Walk practice expose digitization as a cultural process? It produces a digital record of looking at the slides that is not edited or descriptive beyond what the slide itself reveals. This contrasts with the version of the digitized slide collections presented online in the Visual Arts Data Service web site which dissembles the slide to provide an image with text and removing the evidence of the slide’s maker. This digitization becomes a process of editing, where the imperfect but less intrusive Slide Walk images show a respect for the provenance of the slides in the sense of good archive practice. It does not separate the document (the image according to the VADS method of reproducing a slide collection) from the information we need to understand the image. The Slide Walk digital rendering however also makes its own provenance clear by recording the time of its making, and the relationship of the digital image to this practice-based element research as part of a Slide Walk, leaving the interpretation of the artists’ inscriptions to subsequent viewers of this digital document.

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77 Kunsthistorisches Insitut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut, “Florence Declaration: Recommendations for the Preservation of Analogue Photo Archives” (Kunsthistorisches Insitut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institute, October 31, 2009), http://www.khi.fi.it/pdf/florence_declaration_en.pdf.
This “Respect du Fonds” as defined by archive practitioners relates to how archives are kept to reflect how the documents, objects, photographs, were used and how they functioned together originally. The idea is to protect the knowledge embodied in the material in a way that is not necessarily obvious.

Informational value is the full information contained in the archives, distinct from their evidential value – archives will be used for research which has not been envisaged by creators and custodians.\

The WAL slide collection is the archive of a project that initiated a culturally critical action towards raising the visibility of women’s art practice using the technology of the slide. Now that the slide’s technology is changed and isolated from the projector,

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its functionality is curtailed making the slide a more complex object. At the same time, the slide’s mount becomes more important to preserve for its provenance to remain visible and archived accurately. The Slide Walk photograph questions how a critical digitization practice might produce a digital materiality that renders the activated object it represents, in this case the artist’s slide as a projection. It was important to try situating the digitized images in the same experiential spaces that the artists’ slides would have operated in, to understand what further rhetorical qualities might also be activated or rediscovered in the digital object. The practice therefore extends to include experimenting with projections materialized on the surface of walls and physical screens.

By rendering the slide's film image compatible with data projection and reviving the slide's function as a distributable image, the Slide Walk image reproduces the WAL slide’s purpose to disseminate information on women’s practice. The Slide Walk digital image will not embody knowledges and reproduce an artist’s practice in the same way as the analogue slide it depicts, but it nevertheless suggests new readings that are equally politicised by the collection’s feminist objective to bring women’s art practices into view. Significant new meanings derive from the digital image’s visualization of artist’s individual slide inscriptions that foreground the creative process of identifying herself as an artist.
The Slide Walk images varied slide mounts were the basis for the selection of images to project, but it was clear that in terms of representing the artwork, every single slide’s projection, with its cropped in window effect on a dark wall and superior 35mm film image quality, was more immersive than its Slide Walk photograph. The Slide Walk image is a magnification of the slide object recording an instance of close reading. Projected alongside the actual slide exposed the Slide Walk image as a process of digitization that disrupts the slide’s original aim to produce a seamless experience of the artist’s artwork. Instead of producing an unobstructed image of the artwork, the Slide Walk image is showing the evidence of a handmade, collected, preserved photographic object. By creating new edges to the image showing the slide’s situatedness in a slide file, the Slide Walk image shows a convergence of handling practices that include the slides’ organization, storage and identification using polyester files, ink, labels, stickers etc. and indicating the performatve practices of the slide as a communication, collected, archived photographic object.
In contrast to the Slide Walk images bringing multiple material practices into view, digitization can be seen to distort how photographic objects are practised in Glenn Willumson’s description of the “displaced materiality”\textsuperscript{80} of stereographs accessioned into a library collection and displayed in a fine art photography exhibition. The stereograph’s images were digitally extracted from their material support leaving no evidence of its original form to make the stereograph “perform the values of ‘fine art photography’” in the public space of a museum display. The attempt to reinstate the stereograph’s "three-dimensional aesthetics" using an innovative digital display

exposed how its simulation was achieved by digitally editing out the fact of its transition to present the images according to the traditional “presentation mode” of the museum. Willumson observes how this results in a “promotion of a decontextualised aesthetics that was divorced from the materiality of the object and the physical interaction of the viewer” that “eliminated” the materiality of the stereographs thereby rejecting its history and its socio-cultural trajectory. The vital feminist history and socio-cultural meaning of the WAL slide collection would similarly be lost if the materiality of these slides were digitally eliminated.

The Slide Walk images record the artists’ slides like the research photographs described by Charles Rhyne; enriched by their roving but intense attention to unedited contextual detail as a way of preserving the integrity of the object’s accidental as well as intended material qualities that become evidence of its unique socio-cultural trajectory.

[. . .] of course, it is impossible to recreate the experience of the original object, but if we recognize that this is the ideal which we are attempting to approximate, we document works of art differently than in most photographs taken for publication. For example, when we photograph a sketchbook [. . .], we take slides of the entire object, beginning with the front cover [. . .] always recording more than the full page (please leave to the publishers the ruthless straight edges, which eliminate information and have no place in research photographs).

The projections thus show how the Slide Walk photographs replace the ideal of the
digital image as surrogate presentation with the digital image as an imperfect fleeting
approximation of the experience of the original. But even as these images activate the
edges of slides to reveal the slide’s placement in a file and positioning in a collection,
how can this digital material relate the ‘socio-cultural trajectory’ of the WAL slide
collection? The question of what else a slide represents besides artwork leads this
research project to work differently with the Slide Walk images to consider how
digitization would re-present the “art work” in addition to the “artwork” of the WAL
slide collection in a networked environment. In terms of projection the WAL slide
collection’s full substance is more digitally elusive and possibly intangible than the
brilliant robust 35mm slides pictured in the Slide Walks.
Despite the ubiquity of the 35mm slide, the WAL collection was set up to question the normative and reproduce an alternative experience of contemporary art practices to that found in books and catalogues. The Slide Walk method uses commonplace digital technology to reconnect the slides to the collective ideal of WAL by picturing the crowded labels commenting on the artworks and directing the use of the slide. This reveals a whole new visual lexicon through which to read the slide collection beyond the content of its images and emphatically brings the artist engaged with her practice into view. The importance of the new images is how they allow us to appreciate the energy and variety of slide mount labelling that collectively represent the complexity of women’s micro-political – to borrow Suely Rolnik’s use of the term\textsuperscript{83} – art practices. Labelling serves to "point to" the artist and her art practice as well as to the artwork. Their making is a performative writing that occupies the slide mount to assert one's art practice in conjunction with the photographic image. The following chapters examine how the Slide Walks are performances of digitization that

\textsuperscript{83} Suely Rolnik, \textit{Archive Mania} (Distributed Art Pub Incorporated, 2011). Refering to Suely Rolnik’s curatorial purpose as she worked to exhibit the oeuvre of Lygia Clark. "I wanted to produce and transmit a body memory that this experience had affected and in which it was inscribed, in such a way that it might foster the reactivation of this potential in the present."\textsuperscript{83}
begin a process of reconfiguring the WAL slide collection as a performative politicized space.

The Slide Walk photographic research conveys a “sense of production” to prompt new readings of the WAL slide collection that focus beyond the reproductions of artwork to concentrate on the slide as a site where everyday art and activist practices converge. This is not least because the inscribed materiality of the slide mounts often reveals the spontaneity of the everyday as unguarded moments of improvisation and casual notations along with the sustained labour of polished self-presentation. The Slide Walk images and the Slide Walks’ performative recording method integrate the evidence of the everyday with the formal occasion of submitting slides to a public space, while the digitizing process shows both the artist’s and the digitizing photographer’s work of creating a record of artwork as an everyday activism contributing to “projects that seek to bring about changes”.

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84 Pink, *Situating Everyday Life*. 
Conclusion

This chapter describes the practice-based research methodology I devised to work with the WAL slide collection, starting with a photographic project called Slide Walks. The Slide Walk is shown to serve the research in two ways. It replaced my administrative authority with an exploratory artistic performative practice that produced a critique of standard collection digitization practices and discovered the slide mount as an important source of content. Secondly, the Slide Walk photographic project enabled subsequent experiments and new readings using the resulting images in different scenarios such as room projections and producing different research output such as videos and 3D objects. These recontextualizations attended to the multitude of art, administrative and activist practices to be recognized, challenged and performed as a politics of visibility produced by the artist’s slide and the WAL slide collection as a feminist cultural intervention. The chapter introduces theoretical writings about the photographic archive regarding its different materialities beyond the image and the implications of digitization on how we read archived photographic collections. Chapter 3 considers the implications of this process of reviewing the WAL slide collection in terms of performative practices and a feminist politics of visibility.
CHAPTER THREE – Welcoming the noise: Alternative performances of the WAL slide collection

This chapter considers how the new knowledge produced by the Slide Walks developed into a methodology for reproduction, including projection and video recording. This methodology is described in terms of how it enables new ways of looking at the WAL slide collection to reveal “lines of performativity”\(^1\) that highlight the importance of the artist’s slide writing. The chapter sets out the claims of the research thesis that derive from the research practice; these claims focus on how visualizing the slides in different digital as well as analogue setting produces new ways of thinking about the WAL slide collection. I also assert the importance of the written material in the collection and its relationship to the slides as each slide assembles writing to an image. This slide writing endows the WAL slide collection with a cultural importance that is independent of its “representational asset”\(^2\) and in so doing produces a feminist syntax that gives voice to the complexity and individuality of artists’ practices. The “participatory scholarship”\(^3\) of the Slide Walks represents artists in their own performative space of “saying” their art practice. However, in addition to the artists’ own practice, the collective performativity of the WAL slide collection demonstrates, by producing a “poetics of connection,”\(^4\) how the slide writing is a form of “site writing”\(^5\) responding to the fixed text of a male-dominated experience of art.

Discovering “lines of performativity” in the WAL slide collection

The Slide Walks are a performative research method with a set of rules\(^6\) that I use to

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\(^6\) See Appendix 3 “How to Slide Walk”
replace standard digitization techniques, where digitization is simply the function of bringing slide collections back into use by normalizing their image format to comply with the standards and processes of digitizing protocols. The Slide Walk visibly disrupts the outcome of digitization by producing inconsistent images that might be out of focus, awkwardly framed and badly lit images of uneven quality. This shift from predictable results to a prescribed randomness proceeds to address the research question of what a slide represents besides artwork, by creating a new consistency to the digital representation of the WAL slide; it is manually photographed and automatically timed, photographed in a series that always includes more than one artist’s slide file and photographed to include every slide in the file regardless of duplicates and every slide is photographed in its mount. The performativity of this process shows the digitizer as a moving subject recording the slides revealing the artist writing as the original recorder of the artwork. The Slide Walks displaced standard digitization techniques with a photographic action that performed the collection rather than reformatted it, so that the outcome is not focused on reproducing the original ‘message’ of the slide (what an artwork looks like), but to interrogate how the slide represents a convergence of practices that include collecting artists’ slides into a feminist cultural intervention.

I relate the productiveness of the Slide Walks’ disruptive digitization to Teresa Swirski’s formulation of research practice in which she describes focusing on “lines of performativity” as a way of working with a body of inherited knowledge. This is especially important for work looking to discover latent practices and what might be “culturally marginalized or obscured” because this “disrupting the ways in which we ‘see’ data” brings the latent material into view. Swirski’s theory affirms the critical usefulness of the Slide Walks producing lines of performativity in the slide collection through re-enacting the photographic recording work of the women artists and through challenging normative digitization practices. While the Slide Walks are a form of “critical digitization”8 in that they generate another layer of knowledge about the WAL slide collection, they also reconnect the slide collection to the vivid engagement of working the surface of slide mounts that at times also embrace the

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7 Swirski, “Lines of Affect and Performativity Singing the Body Electric-Politic in Qualitative Research.”
unexpected and the flawed. Swirski cites social scientists Hall, Lashua, and Coffey (2008) who seek to “invite the ‘noise’ back into qualitative research”\(^9\) as part of their ‘soundwalking’ methodology that recognizes sound as a constitutive aspect of the everyday. Swirski’s shift from noise to disruption encourages a further shift from the “compelling aural” to note and invite the compressed expressiveness of the artists’ slide mount inscriptions and the intrusive presence of the digitizing photographer both of whom are inscribing or “writing” the WAL slide collection into the different spaces of an analogue material collection and a digitally expanded or networked space.

**Using projection to define spaces of discussion**

I produced and performed variations of analogue and digital projections of the Slide Walk to explore how the digitized slides produce new discursive spaces to experience the WAL slide collection, and to consider what new knowledge or “noise” might result from these experiments.

![Figure 1 Screenshot from Subjectivity & Feminisms Research Group: The Performance Dinners, number five: “Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look”, Chelsea College of Art, 29 April 2013](image)

The first projections juxtaposing analogue slide projections alongside digital screens produced visual interventions that transformed physical spaces into performative viewing theatres, prompting verbal commentary as interaction. In this scenario the

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slides are presented as objects of discussion and isolated from the performative stream of the Slide Walk and the material weight and politicized presence of the WAL slide collection. It was the presenter or interlocutor who would bring the slide collection into the discursive space, to make up for the lack of adequate visual representation.

From this staged experience, I wanted to switch to another discursive space in which the slides – now digitized with their mounts – might be able to perform the collection directly. I focused on digital display, specifically the computer monitor, because it suggests a personal space that is increasingly the central workspace for artists as well as visual resource managers. The computer screen was the equivalent of the physical light table where the Slide Walks took place, the light source against which the work of “walking” or photographically recording was realized. I sought to visualize and capture different ways this digital workspace could convey the artist’s slide as embedded in the WAL slide collection and performing it as an extensive, unknowable entity. I did not want to simulate the real-time Slide Walk, which was an embodied interaction with the original slides, but work with the particular temporalities and material familiarity that constitute computer screen work. Starting with the way the Slide Walk method moved through the collection to perform it, I produced time-based recordings showing the digitized slide or image file as embedded in a digital work environment where images are managed, i.e. the space through which images pass to enter into use.

I began the process of imaging this digital space using the Print Screen function to capture variations on the way images are displayed within a folder, laid across the screen in the various iterations of views from “List”, “Detail”, “Small Icon” to “Extra Large Icon”.
This produced a static lightbox effect that at best set the stage for the subsequent interactions with the collected slides. However this view could not visualize an entire Slide Walk meaningfully; the greater the number of slides, the less detail would appear.

To study a slide in detail it was necessary to visually isolate it from the other slides. My aim to present a Slide Walk in the form of the “string” or “line” (to use Ingold’s terms) of images that made a path in the collection, required me to move away from the light box starting point and begin with an image management task.

My first task was to find a way of presenting an entire Slide Walk online. I was interested in presenting the Slide Walk 11 May 2013 as a stream of images online, but as it consisted of 280 images averaging 1 MB in size, I needed to first reduce their size. Resizing a large set of images is done efficiently using an automated processing command in Photoshop that displays each image for the length of time it needs to generate a resized version and save it. I videoed this process from the computer...
screen to capture the way this algorithmic interaction with the Slide Walk images performed the artists’ slides and to see what substance of the WAL slide collection might emerge. I produced a video that showed not only how a digital programme reduces the size of photographic digital images, but also the time-frame of the Slide Walk. The original Slide Walk session took almost exactly two hours according to the camera-generated timing that each image stores, while the digital processing took 4 minutes and 31 seconds according to the video recording. The new parameters created by this recording was interesting as it compressed the visibility of the slides both in terms of time – how long each was in view – and the images’ digital properties – as their size was reduced. The result was a visibility set by a digitized process rather than an interactive gaze looking to identify what the slides depict. Nevertheless, the stream of images produces a distinct impression of variations between each artist’s slide making practice, or – as in the case of Isik Tüzün, how slide making is a mutable practice.

**Figure 4** Screenshot of Vimeo site for video of Photoshop CS6 batch processing a Slide Walk

This video – *SldWlk1 Jpg Work 07-12-2014 10.08.56* – became my only rendition of an entire Slide Walk into a viewable performative format, in the sense of a format that conveys how these images were collected. I would argue that the static hierarchy set up by storing the images in digital folders in the chronological order they were made, does not convey the actuality and consequence of being collected. In contrast, this video of a procedure interacting with a full set of Slide Walk images from beginning to end, conveys something of the Walk’s scale and the breadth of material discovered. Screen-based experiments show the limits of my knowledge and technical resources,

and at the same time suggest the different knowledges produced by the digital materiality of the Slide Walk images enacted and experienced within the confines of digitized workspaces.

The second video I produced – *Slide Walk Capture November 2014* – researches movement and repetitive labour in a digital work environment, performing a conversion of each image into a non-typical image file.11 This unorthodox treatment of an image file is an extension of the unorthodox digitization of the slide collection through the Slide Walk action, questioning the stability of digitally produced visual documentation.

![Figure 5 Screenshot of Vimeo site for video of converting Slide Walk JPEGs to MHTML files (November 2014)](https://vimeo.com/113079133)

This screen capture shows the steps taken to convert an image taken on a Slide Walk (May 11 2013) into a MHT file, which is a web page archive file format that combines HTML code with images. It is a format that is not a JPEG and defaults to Internet Explorer to be viewed. It is encoded as if it were an HTML e-mail message, a fact that resonates with the concerns of this research as it questions how the “message” of a politically formed slide collection might be embodied in new digital forms. What this infuriatingly slow video conveys very briefly is the time investment that the work of making meaningful image collections demands. This implicates how the creative performativity of the Slide Walk project creating the images and connecting with artistic freedom veers into the digitized administrative practices that are controlling processes rather than attentive maintenance.

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11 *Slide Walk capture November 2014* [https://vimeo.com/113079133](https://vimeo.com/113079133)
Influenced by the “videowalking”\textsuperscript{12} technique of visual anthropologist Sarah Pink, I am using video as part of the research process without the expectation that the video itself produces additional material to analyse; “the most important thing about producing images […] is actually the moment you make those images.”\textsuperscript{13} Producing these videos in addition to the Slide Walk images is important to the research because each embodies the recording experience differently to the Slide Walks as a digital born object produced in a space defined by pixels, software and hardware capacity and using a mouse. These recordings acknowledge the digital work that is necessary to make collections of images functional in networked spaces, which in turn indicates the physical demands of managing digital images. The difference between watching the automated processing of a photographic session alongside the manual task of screen-grabbing and file conversion, is an experience of how creative work is shaped by digital materiality.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\caption{Screenshot of a section of Slide Walk 11 May 2013 in “medium-sized icon view”}
\end{figure}

The GIF format offers another way of animating a section of the Slide Walk on screen producing a pace that I can control and judge to be long enough to register the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Sarah Pink, “Drawing with Our Feet (and Trampling the Maps): Walking with Video as a Graphic Anthropology,” in \textit{Redrawing Anthropology} (Ashgate, n.d.).
\item \textsuperscript{13} Sarah Pink, Filmmaking with visual ethnography – an interview with Sarah Pink, online video, 2015, https://vimeo.com/125571530.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
slide mount writing’s visual impact across enough slides to prevent the images from becoming too prominent in this “walk through” of two artists’ files in the collection.¹⁴ The GIF is a compressed format that is too small to accommodate a full length Slide Walk, and does not have a suitable colour range for photography, but the primitive compression of the slide’s information set into motion produces a digital object that serves the WAL slide collection’s purpose of easy exchange. This experimental format work is part of the research practice that produces alternative digital visualizations of the WAL slide collection that privilege artists’ slidemaking practices.

¹⁴ [https://media.giphy.com/media/Aiuoyn8E01CZG/giphy.gif](https://media.giphy.com/media/Aiuoyn8E01CZG/giphy.gif)

Figure 7 GIF made of Slide Walk images from 13:59:02 to 14:02:12 (Screenshot 7 April 2017 16:45 on 13 inch laptop screen)
The research practice produced examples of how digital technologies perform the slide collection differently to see how the artist/slidemakers have produced a “meaningful text” or feminist recontextualization for women’s art practice. The WAL slide collection is evidence that the WAL women artists enacted as well as anticipated the archival turn in feminism by producing slides. It is not surprising that the archive has become as important a focal point as the work it documents in the current curatorial drive to exhibit and publish on early feminist artists. Curators’ projects with artists’ archives such as Karen DiFranco’s work with Carlyle Reedy blur the division between art practice, performance and documentation. In collaboration with Elisa Kay DiFranco curated a display of seminal feminist artwork of the 1970s that

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17 Chelsea Space, “CHELSEA Space: #63 The Sun Went In, the Fire Went out: Landscapes in Film, Performance and Text Annabel Nicolson, Carlyle Reedy, Marie Yates.”
emphasized the works’ ongoing performativity. Writing about Reedy, DiFranco asserts that:

[...] her practice is not comprised of works as ‘entities’ but rather a series of assemblages or ‘processes’ as the artist describes it. With this in mind ‘Hands’ is an interesting document of a particular moment – like ‘The Path’ it is elemental, and describes how the artist produces [...]\(^{18}\)

Integrating even a degraded photocopied script into an installation devised with the artist not only vividly re-presents artwork but reinserts the practice of documentation as part of a wider feminist intervention. The archive transforms into a politically articulate substance, through which curators can perform feminist work as exemplified by Nayia Yiakoumaki’s work with the activist artists group, the Guerrilla Girls\(^{19}\) and Sophia Hao’s 12 Hour Action Group\(^{20}\) marking the exhibition “Of Other Spaces: Where does gesture become event?”\(^{21}\) These are examples of how curators engage directly with documentation as a political tool for self-organization and urgent change through commission and display.

**Digital spaces defined by artists’ archives**

The Slide Walk produces a new context in which to encounter the WAL slide archive by recovering the tangible evidence of the artists within the framework of the WAL slide collection and its feminist mission. This distinguishes the Slide Walk method of thinking through the artists’ oeuvre from digital archive work such as Athanasios Velios’s method of “Creative Archiving.” The Slide Walk produces a rapprochement between the artist and her archive (the slides) through critical digitization rather than the construction of an online interface. Nevertheless, the context for this critique includes web sites of artists’ archives that endeavour to incorporate a performative


\(^{21}\) Ibid.
element that reproduces the physical experience of the artist’s work and/or archive. The web sites The Archive as Event\textsuperscript{22} (Velios’s case study for his theory of Creative Archiving\textsuperscript{23}) and Artworklife\textsuperscript{24} were developed to assist users to create new meanings and scholarship from scanned archive items, and in the process each raised the issue of how the material is curated by the web projects’ creators rather than the artists represented. The critical contribution of both projects was to devise interfaces that celebrate and preserve the archive material’s uniqueness and content. Both projects are examples of “critical digitization” as opposed to “mass digitization”\textsuperscript{25}, in that each craft the aesthetic of the web site in deference to the artist or the archive’s materiality.

The Archive as Event and Artworklife resulted from careful study of the content of the archives to discern the preoccupations of the artist or convey the archives as performing the artworks. The web sites feature designs that conceive the user experience in these terms. For example, The Archive as Event is designed to present John Latham’s digitized archive in a triangulation of parallel worlds or truths. The web site interface features a diagram that maps the multiple entry points reflecting the artist’s theory of experience and produce his archives as “events.”

\textsuperscript{22} Ligatus and the University of the Arts, “John Latham Archive | A Project by Ligatus and the University of the Arts London to Publish the Archive of the Artist John Latham Online Using Creative Archiving Practice.,” accessed July 15, 2016, http://www.ligatus.org.uk/jla/.


\textsuperscript{25} Dahlström, Hansson, and Kjellman, “‘As We May Digitize’ — Institutions and Documents Reconfigured.”
The title Artworklife recognizes the principle themes of art, work and life that Rosamund Davies discovered during the process of producing the digitized content of WAL artists’ slide files. The web site’s vividly designed interface reflects the experience of browsing material and discovery, becoming an invitation to share in her experience of the slide files.
Figure 10 Detail of screenshot of "Work" page of Artworklife
http://web.archive.org/web/20140304123130/http://artworklife.org.uk/main/work/1/1/1

Figure 11 Screenshot of "Life" page of Artworklife
http://web.archive.org/web/20140304123025/http://artworklife.org.uk/main/life/1/1/1
Velios proposes The Archive As Event (AAE) as an example of “Creative Archiving.” The term describes how the different configurations of information retrieval achieved by the web site challenged the traditional authority of the archivist as the organizer of materials. His argument is that the archivist’s “view” renders an over-defined experience of the archive, becoming “the dominant version of the truth”. And while network technology now enables a “deconstructive practice” online to include – for instance – sourcing content from users, there nevertheless remains an “official” version that is set up by the archivist implementing standards of organizing metadata. Velios turns to Latham’s theories on categorizing experience as a way of introducing different approaches to searching the digitized collection.

Velios draws attention to the subjectivity of the archivist through the web site design as “the implementation of the online archive” and challenges the notion that archives can be organized and implemented without personalized interpretive engagement with the material. Creative archiving takes on the challenge of mediating the archive’s content in a way that makes the density of the artist’s life’s work more accessible and introduces an “interpretive layer” to basic archival records produced in accordance to standards such as Dublin Core. It is interesting to note that as Velios conceives creative archiving, the interpretive layer prevents the archive catalogue from “being lost within larger collections of big institutions”. Although the Slide Walk research method does not produce an interpretive conceptualization of the slide collection that can be mapped onto the WAL collection’s archive catalogue, the research nevertheless shares Velios’s motive to assert the archive’s – e.g. the WAL slide collection’s – independent qualities, and respond to some kind of originary vision. Velios’s creative archiving is guided by Latham’s unique classification theories, and my research practice is guided by the feminist objective of making women’s art more visible. But where Velios followed his artist subject to question the notion of a single true way of organizing and accessing the archived knowledge, I follow the WAL slide collection to question the practice of digitization as a transparent way of organizing and accessing the knowledge in the slides. This questioning began with my experience of producing digitized slides for Rosamund Davies as she developed the Artworklife web site as a creative interface to a database.

26 Velios, “Creative Archiving.”
27 Ibid.
of text and images digitally archived from the WAL slide collection.

The Slide Walk’s digital archive work was achieved in a performative way using a camera and is a form of creative archiving in that it appears to be interpreting the collection by being selective and producing unique images. However, given that the Slide Walk is a research practice discovering new meaning in the WAL slide collection, I suggest that the digital archiving that it produces is in consultation with the material that is being digitized. Although the Slide Walk results in images of diverse artists’ practices, the purpose aligns more closely with the concept of “critical digitisation” put forward by Dahlström et al. in a paper published just a year after Velios’s in 2012.28 “Critical digitization” creates a range of digital interpretive material in response to a material collection and is contrasted with “mass digitization” which deploys automated digitization to create a volume of data that is de-contextualized from the material collection. The Slide Walk deploys neither digitization strategy clearly, but it produces an aberrant and unsystematic method of digitization that is more focused on my/the digitizer’s exploratory interaction with the slide files than the academic institution’s remit to enhance access. The Slide Walk produces digital material that has a clear identity with the interaction with the slide files recorded in time as well as image. This new materialization of the slide collection in digital form suggests a third approach to digitization that complicates the process to show it responding to the material being digitized. It is the physical and conceptual properties of the WAL slide collection, the vastness, the way it is packaged in translucent polyester hanging files, its situation near a room with a light table, etc., that produced the Slide Walks as a digitization strategy. Velios’s creative archiving devised an interface to Latham’s archive that extends the accessibility of the artist’s theoretical ideas. In a similar move, the Slide Walk initiated photographic archiving work that responds to the artist’s participation in the collective work of raising visibility to continue that work by extending the accessibility of the WAL artist’s practice.

28 Dahlström, Hansson, and Kjellman, “‘As We May Digitize’ — Institutions and Documents Reconfigured.”
The Slide Walks’ version of a critical digitization is a “performed scholarship” as cultural theorist Dwight Conquergood describes, which “interrogates and decentres, without discarding, the text” as a means of paying attention to what “gets lost and muted in texts.”29 The structure of the WAL slide collection is non-hierarchical and already decentred in its organization, but the way it is used or experienced rarely includes a cross-section of the slide files with the exception of the Artworklife project, which digitized the slide files of artists whose surname began with S. But where Artworklife recovered the relationship of slides to the artists’ papers by digitizing all the material in slide files, the Slide Walks recovered the inscribed slide mounts to decenter the slides’ function as an indexical record of an artwork and recuperate its effectiveness as an artist’s creation used to reproduce and communicate their practice.

The slide mounts and slide-writing form a distinct descriptive idiom.

As the Slide Walk brings the marginal into view, it becomes possible to appreciate...
different ways each artist used the small area around a slide to set out rules of engagement with her slides and for the first time see this slide writing as an extended practice. Nearly all the slide mounts are inscribed with the artist’s name and a number for identification.

The artists usually followed their names with notations describing the artwork’s dimensions, media, date and title most often writing the slide mount to supplement the information in the image transparency. Artists would also indicate how to use the slide correctly, e.g. which way to insert it into a carousel or hold up to view the artwork which are two different positions that might not be obvious without considering the positioning of other information on the mount.
The aesthetic of labelling varies with each artist at different phases of working with slides, and reflects the spontaneity of slide writing as well as the administrative purpose.
Artists with established files in the WAL slide collection would sometimes update their files with slides that are marked in a minimal way that assumes that the accompanying list that was submitted with the slides would always be available for identification; in other words that the slide will not be separated from the artist’s file.

The slide mount annotation is a space for revision, and sometimes informality.
most personal to the artist, responding to the challengingly small and rough surfaced slide mount, and designing an index to the slides’ details.

Figure 22 Slide Walk 31 March 2012, 16:58:58

Figure 23 Slide Walk 25 May 2013, 12:58:46
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>26 x 31.5 cm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on:</td>
<td>DISTORTED IMAGE OF FACE WITH AN EQUALLY DISTORTED KITCHEN IN BACKGROUND. FACE ROUNDED.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>曖昧に死ぬ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 24 Slide Walk 25 May 2013, 13:02:12*
I regard the inventiveness of slide writing as examples of how the women artists in the WAL produce a “poetics of connection” in the sense that Kristen Kreider proposes the late manuscripts of Emily Dickinson do. Her study looks closely at how Dickinson uses the space of the fragment, to interact with a public sphere of writing and reading. Kreider’s critical reading expands what the words written on the fragments say to highlight their material and spatial qualities as “performing the page.
This critical understanding of a document as a performative site resonates with the notion of the Slide Walks performing the WAL slide collection as a site, in order to understand how the material of the WAL slides collectively produce an experience of women’s art practice. Kreider writes of connection being produced in “an interchange across or between semiotic systems” that suggests a way of thinking about how the slide represents an artwork through image, descriptive text, title, presentation styles but also within the context of a feminist cultural resource and into future public spheres. The poetics of the WAL slide collection, as a performative political collection of representation, comes to represent the absent woman artist as well as the present. Since the WAL slide collection cannot be comprehensive, it inevitably produces and acknowledges gaps in knowledge of women artists. The missing become the WAL slide project’s “sign of addition” in the sense that Kristen Kreider writes of a cut in one of Emily Dickinson’s manuscripts written on a recycled envelope. The cut is where a stamp had been removed and indicates how Dickinson incorporated stamps and cut-outs from printed texts to these late manuscripts. The cut and absent stamp clearly relate that particular manuscript to a coherent experimental performative poetic practice that performs the material. Viewing the slide collection as a feminist performative practice to represent women artists, the absent woman artist connects the slides to a performative practice of visualization.

The slide mounts show the WAL slide collection as a physical assemblage of written material interacting with the photographic in a distinct descriptive idiom. To explore this idea further I devised a performative exercise to present at the 6th Feminist Performance Dinner themed on Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons*. I concentrated on the action of slide writing by filling a slide box with 17 different artists’ slides and transcribing and describing the inscriptions into spoken representations of the artists’ artworks onto 17 blank slide mounts. I selected a range of slides whose text and

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symbols I could arrange in a way that playfully evoked a reading in Stein’s modernist style for the setting of a dinner which presented the rare opportunity to re-present the WAL artist slide outside the normative concept of the delicate archival slide. I produced a small text-based collection of women artists slides to be read aloud during which participants were made to pronounce each artist’s name. I repeated the performance for a seminar held at the University of Brighton during which I drew the performative reading more closely to the research methodology of producing new lines of performativity in the WAL slide collection and to consider the importance of naming as a feminist strategy of intervention.\textsuperscript{32} I consider this strategy in the broader context of the WAL slide collection as a material spatial practice built around the artist’s name and her practice of self-identification.

![Slide mount from A Box](image)

\textbf{Figure 28. Slide mount from A Box}

Figures 28, 29 and 30 refer to a series of photographs that document A Box showing how the inscription is partially smudged. My deliberate use of a “soft” oil-based pencil before distributing the slide mounts to participants enhanced the effects of touch after everyone was served finger food to dispel protocols of cleanliness in handling the mounts. It was important for me to disseminate the slide mounts to be transformed by this handling and to hear each being read aloud by members of the

\footnote{\textsuperscript{32}Althea Greenan, “Rescue the Saying from the Said” (iota (image-object-text-analysis) seminar series, University of Brighton, December 8, 2015). See Appendices 1 and 2 for a description of A Box, the script and the iota seminar.}
public to dispel my own professional habit of presenting slides through expertise and instructions on care and handling in the restricted space of Special Collections. Being able to freely distribute the simulated slides into a social communicative space was a valuable way to loosen the message from the material and produce another line of performativity for the artists’ slide inscription practices.

Figure 29. “Wendy Sullivan” slide mount from The Box

Figure 30. “Lygia Clark” slide mount from The Box

What makes these artists’ utilitarian writing practices important to highlight? My research literature review did not identify any study that takes this aspect of art practice into a theoretical framework. The closest to a study in this kind of writing is
John C. Welchman’s work on artists’ titles\textsuperscript{33} and their importance in art history. As he observes, titles constitute a “rhetoric that names,”\textsuperscript{34} which resonates with how the WAL slide collection coheres around the political necessity to produce an ongoing naming of the woman artist. Thus I distinguish the slide labelling performed by the women artists who sent slides to the WAL from other slide labelling practices. Until this research project, the woman artist’s slide writing has been a hidden labour and unacknowledged as a vital activity underpinning the feminist project of raising the visibility of artists’ practices. It was therefore important for the practice-based research to not only produce images through the Slide Walk, but engage with different ways of reading the collection that the Slide Walk images unlocked.

Decentering the research from the slides’ images to their mounts disrupts and extends how the slides perform. Making digital images of mounted slides expands the physical possibilities of where these slides can be projected from physical screens to LCD screens, combining analogue slide projections with data projections. The presentations/projections are always part of a verbal presentation giving it context. This performed aspect of projection makes the image more accessible, especially if the interlocutor is the artist herself, adding a layer of emotional content. However, in lieu of the artist’s actual voice, the slide mount inscription produces an affective communication about the artwork and the origin of the image.

**New readings, hidden work beyond the text: the research as performative**

Jane Birkin’s practice as a photographer acknowledges the repetitive work of maintaining images in institutional collections as performative in a way that parallels my investigation of digital screen-based work with the Slide Walk image-set as an investigation into what new knowledges are produced within the confines of digitized workspaces. Even though Birkin is focusing on established archive practices, we share an awareness of the specific dynamic of image collections, “where notions of interdependencies and interrelationships between objects take precedence over the


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
representational assets of the single image.”35 Her view is informed by her professional experience as a slide curator and visual resource manager, and looks at how photographs are positioned by and experienced through the text-based descriptions produced by institutional archive work.36 Archive work thus performs the collection through the kind of lived experience of collection that the Slide Walks enact, which affects how each slide is experienced as an element in the physically dense and unknowable expanse of the collection as a body. As Birkin observes so well, “Once lived, worked, and understood in this way, the archive, its structure, and the position of the single object relative to it start to acquire tangibility.”37

The Slide Walks reveal the connectedness between the slides as their mounts finally come into visible tangibility. Birkin concludes that “Archival practices are performative in nature”38 by finding parallels with artworks and showing how such practices secure the image in an institutional framework. Women artists secured their images in the framework of the WAL slide registry as it became established as the Women Artists Slide Library from 1982 onwards, to create the alternative institution of the WAL collection. They expanded their practices to include the workflow of slidemaking and submitting slides to the WAL, sometimes once, but often year after year until the membership organization ceased operating in 2002. The WAL slide collection was achieved through this performative aspect of art practice that women artists engaged in as self-archivists.

In performative art practice authorial control is established early on in the work, in the design of the workflow; this method parallels that of the archivist, who, working to established conventions, produces work that is near algorithmic in form and intent, and where authorship is largely unrecognized.39

35 Birkin, “Art, Work, and Archives.”
36 Jane Birkin, “Units of Description: Writing and Reading the ‘archived’ Photograph” (phd, University of Southampton, 2015), http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/377132/.
37 Birkin, “Art, Work, and Archives.”
38 Birkin defines her use of the term performative to distinguish from J.L. Austin’s definition where the ‘saying’ produces the ‘doing’ (as in saying “I apologize”) and instead cites Margaret Iverson’s assertion that the term performative: “should be ‘reserved for the work of those artists who are interested in displacing spontaneity, self-expression and immediacy by putting into play repetition and the inherently iterative character of the instruction.’”
39 Birkin, “Art, Work, and Archives.”
In a similar way, the artist’s investment in her slides is an unexamined but significant aspect of her practice.

However, even as the Slide Walk image maintains the WAL slide’s integrity by picturing image and annotated mount together, the problem of how digitization might effectively disengage the slide from the collection remains. Writing from her professional experience Birkin questions the effect of digitization on the collected image where pulling images from archives not only decontextualizes them but appears to disempower them. She provides the example of a photograph that gains status as an art object while it loses its place “within other discursive practices” citing Douglas Crimp, who lists documentation and evidence amongst the photographic practices that a fine art photograph loses.40 The WAL artist’s intention for her slides to not only document and evidence her artwork but to support the WAL’s critical feminist discourse, is lost when the photographic image is extracted from its mount to become a digital file in the standard way that Birkin outlines, because even when digitized slides are accompanied by descriptions written by scrupulous digitizers, the resulting text cannot have the same relationship to the image that the artist’s slide mount inscriptions forge with the slide’s transparency of her artwork.

Birkin notes that, “Inside the indexical and diachronic arrangement of the archive, images and descriptions are viewed through something other than a narrative gaze, as lists [. . .]”41 This “something other than a narrative gaze” evokes the order of the archive as list-making, and resonates with the way the text on slide mounts repeats names, dimensions, dates and titles. The artists’ descriptions while brief, uneven and repetitive, nevertheless construct a meta-text that literally sits in the margins of the slide and persists as an artists’ construction rather than an institution’s.

The artists’ metatext drives the restless movement of the Slide Walks recording brief encounters with artists’ slides to produce a “nomadic narration”42 of the WAL slide collection – to borrow from Maria Tamboukou’s account of reading women artists’

40 Ibid.
41 Birkin, “Units of Description.”
42 Maria Tamboukou, In the Fold between Power and Desire : Women Artists’ Narratives / Maria Tamboukou. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010).
archives. Tamboukou’s narrative research method enabled her to focus on the connectedness of the stories that emerged from the archives of women artists living at the turn of the 19th into the 20th century. She deliberately remained “on the surface” of the archives rather than select a representative collection to examine in detail, revealing her subjects as women “in search of a new mode of being or rather of becoming”\textsuperscript{43} as artists. In a similar way to the Slide Walks, the wider focus she achieved revealed the complexity of these stories “without definitive beginnings or ends” yielding “nomadic narratives” constructed outside the mainstream narrative of art history. While the Slide Walks highlight the artists’ inscriptions as another entry point into the “meaningful text” of the WAL slide collection, so Tamboukou’s narrative research finds that the archives of letters and papers endow a space:

\[\ldots\] “in the margins of hegemonic discourses” (De Lauretis 1989, 18) for the female self in art to emerge rather than disappear. This emergence, however, has not constituted a unitary core self, but rather a matrix of subject positions for women “writing themselves” to inhabit, not in a permanent way, but temporarily, as points of departure for going elsewhere, \textit{becoming other}.\textsuperscript{44}

Making the artwork, producing slides and creating files in a public slide collection engaged the WAL artist in a circular workflow that validated her practice and slides might signal points of departure in the work’s development. The WAL slide collection expanded the remit of the artist’s slide from representing a single artwork to evidencing women’s art practice awarded feminist cultural status. The Slide Walk re-produces the slide as a contextualized image in its mount and this also endows each with a meaning independent of its “representational asset.” The Slide Walk demonstrate how the slide files make women’s art practice \textit{narratable}, in the sense that Tamboukou writes, “the \textit{narratable} self has a unique story without being reducible to the content of this story”.\textsuperscript{45} The WAL slide collection’s cultural value is engendered by women producing their artist selves or as Tamboukou writes: “how women artists make sense of themselves as artists through art.”\textsuperscript{46}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{43} Ibid. p.1
\bibitem{44} Ibid. p.7
\bibitem{45} Tamboukou, \textit{In the Fold between Power and Desire}. p.8
\bibitem{46} Ibid. p.9
\end{thebibliography}
that the Slide Walks images represent the artists’ practices in flow suggest how the WAL slides collectively anticipate future work and undiscovered art practices. The performative aspect of the Slide Walk produces a set of instructions that prescribe the Walk as a reading and re-writing of the WAL slides to make a “total sense” of the collection. This line of performativity shows how the WAL slide collection enables the story of women’s art practices to be narratable in a way that is emergent.

I developed the Slide Walks to shift how I “practised the space” of the WAL slide collection as its designated curator. The Slide Walks are a research method that “critically performed” the WAL slide collection as a site, engaging each slide as part of a sustained engagement with the whole collection to understand it as a site where many practices converge but constitute a singular political message. The WAL slide collection complicates the syntax, “the rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure”\(^{47}\) of valuing art through its documentation because, in addition to the representation of women, the slides are primary sources that remain primary, rarely integrated into catalogues or web sites that constitute a resource of trusted/accepted information. The artists wrote themselves into the WAL slide collection but as the feminist project confronted the parameters of established resources to widen the field of vision, how can this syntax of names, data, work outside of the slide collection? What does the new legibility of the slide mount texts collectively change about how the WAL slide collection is read? What kind of new syntax of representing art practice does the slide mount form alongside the “representational asset” of the slide? The rules of art documentation are compromised by the digital interventions this research has used to examine what else the WAL slide might represent besides artwork, to create a more pluralistic, feminist space for digital representation. As Kreider notes, quoting the poet educator Barrett Watten, “Syntax has a spatial dimension, if space is taken in the broadest sense to be not only physical but cultural and linguistic”\(^{48}\). As the Slide Walk image raises awareness of the material syntax of the slide, it also highlights an alternative way of looking at this art documentation. Considering how the Slide Walk has shifted and reasserted the feminist dimension of the WAL slide collection, it also sees a feminist syntax of looking at art.

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\(^{48}\) Kristen Kreider, Poetics and Place, p. 70
Various artworks have been produced in response to the WAL collection, but Clare Gasson’s *The River*\(^9\) stands out as engaging with the WAL collection as a totality and articulating its physical extent. Gasson’s interest in performative texts prompted her interest in locating women artists’ manifestos during her artist residency at the WAL in 2011. Once immersed in the space of the WAL collection her search came to focus on the text that structured the whole of the collection: the artists’ names. Gasson adapted a database listing every artist represented in the WAL to become a musical score, working with the musicologist Huw Hallam to reproduce the collection as a performance for eight vocalists during which each artist’s name is spoken.\(^{50}\) *The River* manifests the WAL as a feminist collection project, not by reciting names but through the act of naming. The collection is performed as a steady stream suspending the audience in the space of an hour spent filling the room with artists’ names. The mesmerizing performance of enunciating artists’ names on this scale depended on the artist producing a unique intersemiotic syntax that bridged database through music to performance.


\(^{50}\) See APPENDIX 7 – Documentation relating to *The River*, Clare Gasson 2011
The River gives an insight into the obscured syntax of the WAL collection that is underpinned by the thousands of slide mounts autographed by artists. The curator Anne-Sophie Dinant’s observations that link labour with giving voice suggests in the interview quoted below how Gasson succeeded in giving shape to the expanse of the WAL collection while representing each artist uniquely.

Making posters, writing scripts for songs, song-poems, using laborious processes for text and so on introduces the double notion of manual labour and the body of work, producing the body’s voice. What the repetition of work and voice brings together is the basic recipe for the creation of certain beat-driven song forms, such as workers’ songs […] to assist the processes (rhythm, motion) of labour. For The River, Gasson worked with professional singers, working with them, creating rhythms emanating from the script so that labour is directly connected to the physical work of the body through the voice.

CG: The absolute strictness of the working with lists is very interesting to me because it has a repetitive labour element to it; assembling something governed by the beat, corresponding to something you’re actually doing with material, whether it’s writing or typing. I wanted to get to a point where the vocalists could actually all split rhythms across a name, but that’s quite difficult when they are going at different rhythms. I see it as a piece that can continue to grow in complexity and
be reworked.

A-S D: The intention is to extend this process, directly connecting it performatively to the viewer, as is communicated by one of the sentences inscribed on the poster accompanying the exhibition: *Yes to the connection between the voice and the audience.*

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**Figure 32** The poster produced for *The River* at South London Gallery Live Art programme October 2011 and exhibition at The Women’s Art Library, Goldsmiths College, 2011.

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The WAL is an edifice of information structured by alphabetizing artists’ surnames and generated by activities around receiving material, accessioning and cataloguing online. The names provide entry points into all sections of the WAL collection, and enable its navigation by administrators and researchers alike towards discovering new material, as well as new artists/names. Naming is a feminist performance to produce and maintain polyvocality. This insistence on naming is a recurrent theme in the context of feminist work on visibility. Naming endows a performative synergy to the artists’ slide files, which is authoritative but does not predetermine or fix the possible stories. Instead, naming safeguards the feminist rule of polyvocality and signals “giving voice to one’s experience” as part of maintaining the necessary “critical consciousness that teaches about structures of domination and how they function,” as bell hooks observes. It is the informed collective identity that becomes capable of transformational work.

[...] when a name comes, it immediately says more than the name: the other of the name and quite simply the other, whose irruption the name announces.

The artist’s name, the naming of the artist, the artist naming herself and submitting to the collection to add her name to it, is the way the WAL slide collection works as a practice of site-writing. The performative naming of women artists has emerged from different practices in the U.K. since Hannah O’Shea’s Litany for Women Artists. Women artists’ names become a site for cultural critique taking over public cultural spaces as a way of retrieving women artists informs more recent projects such as Lucy Reynolds’ work with the Feminist Chorus with the records of the Glasgow School of Art registers and Sarah Carne’s residency in the National Visual Archives.

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of Ireland, “Looking for Barbara.”56 Within the context that they created in the WAL slide collection, women produced a syntax of art documentation, which writes a feminist art account and gives voice to the complexity and individuality of artists’ practices. Polyvocality works against closure, as Conquerwood illustrates as he cites Michel de Certeau who, he writes,

[…] privileged timing, tuning, touching, and rupture over [Paul] Ricœur’s containment, inscription, abstraction, and closure: “Whereas the object beheld can be written – made homogenous with the linearity of stated meaning and constructed space – the voice can create an aparte, opening a breach in the text and restoring a contact of body to body […] in the urgency of a ‘saying,’ an act of speech which will be neither docile to a spoken truth nor subject to a statement” (de Certeau 1988,235)57

The WAL slide collection as a body of writing practices: “site writing” and feminist participation

The Slide Walk image visually reinstates the inscribed slide mount as the primary text attached to each slide and the artist’s inscription is thus preserved in a way that continues to define her practice across the spaces of stored material archive and digital output.

To view the artists’ inscription work as a layer of activity across the surface of a number of slide mounts, I digitally enhance the visual information on the slide mounts and isolate the writing. The resulting distortion visualizes how the slide mounts are connected by the artist’s performative writing producing a unique supporting framework for artwork images.

57 Conquergood, Cultural Struggles.p.56
The writing appears as a structuring as well as framing device, as the work of titling, dating, numbering and naming responds to the transparency or diapositive’s representation of the artwork. These distorted digital images show the tactility of handwriting interacting with the surface of the slide mount shows how the space of the slide mount guided the artist’s hand and constitutes a significant amount of semiotic and physical material in the slide file. These images show how the slide mount becomes an active performative space within the WAL artist’s slide file.

This visualization is an extension of “critical digitization” that not only explores the distortion of digitization of analogue materials, but uses it to reveal how the slide – in both its analogue and Slide Walk digital image form – is a space where layers of self-representation converge to write the artist’s art practice into the WAL slide collection. When artists sent their slides to the WAL slide collection they produced a space in which they acted as participants in making cultural knowledge. How does my
research recognize the involvement of women artists in the WAL slide collection now that they are no longer sending in slides? How does my research recognize the WAL slide collection as an ongoing feminist project?

The Slide Walk images and subsequent experiments in visualizing the walks reveal densely covered surfaces indicating the artists’ writing across thousands of slides. To theorize how the WAL slide collection might be “read”, I draw on Conquergood’s “Beyond the Text: Toward a Performative Cultural Politics”\(^{58}\) to propose the practice-based elements of my research as a “participatory understanding” showing the WAL slide collection as a feminist cultural intervention. Conquergood’s argument against the predominance of academic text in the production of knowledge resonates with the feminist project that the WAL slides continue to represent as he describes “social commitment, collaboration, and contribution/intervention as a way of knowing: praxis.”\(^{59}\) It also frames how the Slide Walks answer the research question by looking “beyond the text” of the slides’ images of artwork. The women artists in the slide collection are failed by the images of artworks, not only in terms of how knowledge and culture is classified but how it becomes a fixed representation of dynamic art practices. I therefore include the slide image in my citation of Conquergood’s critique of text when he states, “The textual paradigm is not a sensitive register for the nonverbal dimensions and embodied dynamics that constitute meaningful human interaction,”\(^{60}\) which sets out how performative cultural production needs to be acknowledged differently. The production of academic text presumes a more desirable stabilizing of knowledge, which suggests how the archive, and the WAL slides themselves, might be considered stable texts on which producing knowledge depends. But it is the nature of the work that Conquergood analyses, through comparing the concepts of what constitutes “meaningful text” of philosophers Paul Ricœur and Michel de Certeau, that outline how this work of producing knowledge needs to be tested by practice by a community in and outside of academia.

My research testing the parameters of digitization began with the sense that the

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58 Conquergood, “Beyond the Text.”
59 Conquergood, Cultural Struggles. p.42
60 Conquergood, “Beyond the Text.”
community of WAL artists risked being misrepresented by standard methods of
digitization. This led to a new focus on the slide mounts and the artist’s process of
writing her slides as a way of understanding her role in what the WAL slide
collection articulates today. Conquergood’s analysis of the role of writing in creating
knowledge contrasts the ideal of the stability of fixed inscription or “sedimentation”
that Ricoeur proposes, with the “performative” celebrating mobility and action
endorsed by de Certeau. Conquergood’s resistance to sedimentation sends researchers
to find or produce “meaningful text” alongside active engagement with the
community.

Instead of endeavoring to rescue the “said” from the “saying”, a
performance paradigm struggles to recuperate the saying from the
said, to put mobility, action, and agency back into play.\textsuperscript{61}

The “meaningful text” that emerges from the “participatory scholarship” of the
research represents artists in their own performative space of “saying” their art
practice. Each WAL slide punctuates and drives this personal articulation, but they
also build the WAL slide collection into a public site that continuously responds to
the fixed text of a male-dominated experience of art.

Digitizing the collection suggests another “line of performativity”, but the difference
between conventional digitization practices disseminating slide collections as
artefacts and the Slide Walks practice of wandering through the collection and
photographing the marginal text with the image, suggests that the texts, which
digitization produces from the collection need not be a fixed archivable “said” but a
meaningful \textit{writing} that engages with what the collection is “saying”. The Slide
Walks revisit the WAL slide collection, but used digitization to chart the action of
engaging with the slide files rather than produce a stabilized digital version of its text.
The stability resides in the collection as a site of knowledge that is constructed by
artists representing themselves through slides that serve as a complex performative
tool of communication and documentation.

\textsuperscript{61} (Conquergood 1998)
To understand how important this writing is to the WAL slide collection’s feminist work I turn to the concept of “site writing”62 devised by Jane Rendell as a way of understanding how writing – alongside images and design – constructs space. Rendell’s term derives from the way she understands how discourses of “identity, difference and subjectivity” seem to draw on terms that are “highly spatialized” – such as “mapping”, “positioning”, “boundaries” – to develop the notion of “situated knowledge.” This concept pinpoints how the research approaches the legacy of the WAL slide collection, to discern how today it enacts “the relationship between the construction of subjects and the politics of location.”63 The concept of “site writing” frames the cycle of work that begins with making slides of artwork and results in contributing them to the WAL collection as a politicized action of self-identification. “Site writing” conveys how the woman artist becomes an active architect of the WAL slide collection whose slide files are a performative feminist location that receives and recognizes art practice as a constant reinvention. The build up of slides represents a “site” in which to experience a feminist discourse that produces an alternative visibility for women’s art practice politically located as independent of mainstream sites of cultural consumption such as museums and publications.

The research practice included an experiment in taking handwritten notes along with the photographic images, as part of my response to slide collection as the woman artist as slide-maker. I mirrored artists’ habit of inscribing the slide mount through note-taking with an electronic pen64, thereby using a digitized version of analogue technology for writing in the same way I used a DSLR camera for making digital images (as opposed to a smart phone or IPad for example). During the first two walks I made handwritten notes to reflect on and extend the slide mounts’ notation through an ethnographic account of the Slide Walk photographic session. The smartpen enabled me to produce a digital object by writing in a notebook with specially prepared paper that interacted with the laser reader installed in the pen that recorded the strokes of my hand writing with a ballpoint nib.

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63 Ibid.
64 Livescribe: Echo smartpen https://www.livescribe.com/uk/smartpen/echo/
I produced notes during several Slide Walks, but stopped because writing interrupted the immersive flow of photographing the slide files by provoking a reflexive thinking practice that drew me back into the role of curatorial interpretive responsibility I sought to override. This troubling aspect of writing affirmed the direction that my research practice was taking towards a performative method of enquiry producing an embodied experience of photographing the slide collection. This element of the research is significant as it represents the first attempt to work with the striking presence of artists’ handwritten notations on the slide mounts by noting recollections triggered by names and any quantifiable data such as numbers of slides or years representing each artist. The notetaking was a productive exercise in that it highlighted how the process of digitization produces a distinctive materiality along with distortion. The optical character recognition software that digitized the handwritten notes produced a flawed digital text that reveals the interference of a digital process in the analogue material of printed word.
The digital photographs of Slide Walks show how the handwritten slide mounts visually dominate the WAL slides leading to the research question of how this writing produces a meaningful text, subsequently explored in both digital and analogue forms of projection, video and performative objects such as a flipbook. In *Poetics and Place*, Kristen Kreider describes how “handwriting is typically considered ‘external’ to scriptural space” which sets up an interesting reflection on how slide mount notes convey important information regarding the slide image but remain peripheral to the more significant content of the transparency. As slides are scanned, these handwritten notes are normally transcribed, reproduced in a different digital “scriptural space” but like the scanned transparency separated from the slide mount, the text separated from the handwriting contributes to undermining the slides’ complex representation of the artist’s practice and displacing her presence. In contrast the Slide Walk photographs record how the collection is enriched by the wide variety of writings and inscriptions achieved within the 0.5 x 5.2cm spaces of the top and bottom of the slide mount representing the artist’s studio practice in a material way.

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65 Kristen Kreider, *Poetics and Place*. p.81
The noisy aberrant digital practices that bring the slide mount into view serve to distinguish the slide collection as being made up of photographic objects comprising different “semiotic spatial orders” or referential contexts. Starting with the original referential context created by the slide film indexing the artwork, the research’s widening focus shows the slide mount indexing the artwork’s place in the artist’s practice. The material context produced by the film transparency, situates the slide within the context of photography. Framed by the inscribed slide mount the slide is also situated within the context of writing/labelling/titling/art documentation.
embodied in the material of its sticky labels, ink, etc.

Figure 39 Slide Walk 25 May 2013, 12:41:00 Lightbox switched off

While slide mount markings are not poetry, they are mediating art practices and are shaped by the materials. This presents the slide mount as a hybrid space where the artist – like Dickinson – “puts the disparate contexts or spatial orders of the public and private together in the symbolic, visual and material spatial order of [...]” not a manuscript page but a slide of her artwork.

Figure 40 Slide Walk 25 May 2013, 14:22:54 showing example of unlit slide alongside slide lit enough to display the transparency as well as slide mount
As Kreider does with Dickinson’s manuscript A 499, I suggest that the film and the slide mount produce “an index to the public and private realm”\(^\text{66}\) that reflects artists working in their studios to produce the slides that “write” the WAL slide collection into the public cultural realm as a lasting feminist spatial practice.

The idea of the WAL slide collection being “site written” by its artists resonates with the internet-influenced theoretical model of the Museum 3.0\(^\text{67}\) proposing that museum users should determine the content of the museum’s programme rather than “the

\(^{66}\) Ibid., p99

artworld” in the same way that users of digital networked content like Youtube produce and curate its subject matter. The director of mima (Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art) Alastair Hudson, explains his innovative vision for the future of mima which reinvents the museum as a “resource that people can use regularly like a church, the gym, a social club to replenish and enrich their daily lives” because it is “built on usership.”

The next chapter in mima’s history will evolve around the concept of The Museum 3.0 This is an idea of the museum that is built on usership, that is, a place that is created and given meaning by the sum actions of all its users. This idea comes from ‘Usership Theory’ and the language of our age – information technology.68

This correlation between the public space of the museum, the civic centre and the digital network suggests how the open call to self-identified women artists to produce a slide library of women’s art, is a formula anticipating the democratic intervention of digital networked culture into the mainstream. For the Museum 3.0 aspires to become as central to its local population as a library or town hall, to realize a “public culture” “where the value of the museum is created by the sum activity of all its users...whether children...visitors...staff...university researchers.”69 “Site-writing” as practised by the self-identified women artists building the WAL slide collection, suggests how using slides as “a practice which, like architecture, is both spatial and material”70 results in a user-led collection reproducing an alternative public culture, with which to confront the artworld.

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Conclusion

The practice element of the research produced a series of “entanglements” with the WAL slide collection to understand what knowledges it produces outside of the space of the physical collection. Can these lines of performativity be seen to introduce the noise into the “future” space of the analogue slide collection? This research takes the position that future points of access and usability for the slide collection will depend on digital networked environments. This assumes that the slide collection, in order to be fully understood in a digital networked environment, will be digitized in some form. The practice-based work not only decenters the research focus from the slides’ pictorial content to the slide as a complex performative object, it decenters the WAL slide collection’s cultural authority from the limits of the physical collection. What is practiced or performed in a range of “local” and networked spaces, from the light table to a digitally readable notebook to a desktop screen are “entanglements” produced not only between the Analogue and the Digital, but also between the WAL slide collection and the Network environment. By testing the performativity of the WAL slide in digital and analogue spaces, I am not looking for a collective message from these artists, but a sense of what the collection does and keeps doing. The videos show the difficulties of digitally connecting with the collection, and induce the claustrophobia of an overwhelming archive. This contrasts with the Slide Walk experience during which I set my pace and watched the slides come into focus one by one. Each “shot” suggests a formed thought that works in the context of other slides. The implication of the “material spatial practices” that the WAL slide collection brings together is that it produces a unique space in which to experience women’s art, a rhetorical space, as described by the feminist philosopher Lorraine Code who writes of the importance of recognizing the “textured location where it matters who is speaking and where and why, and where such mattering bears directly upon the possibility of knowledge claims”.71 The following chapter considers how the new performative reading that this research proposes shows how the woman artist used the slide to participate in a feminist issue network and how this use of the slide suggests how the WAL slide collection might be digitally evolved rather than digitally defined.

CHAPTER FOUR – The WAL Slide Collection as feminist net-work

The WAL artist’s slide collection is performative because it is an element in a wider feminist action, i.e. it is a model for challenging the artworld. Digitization is a mode of performance that coheres the WAL slide collection into a politicized “rhetorical space” produced by women’s artists. This chapter considers how the digital performance of the artist’s slide reveals the WAL slide collection as feminist network. The chapter examines the artist’s slide in terms of its innate function as an image communication tool and how this was politicized by women artists. The discussion then considers the WAL slide collection in the light of the Slide Walk images and performances that demonstrate how the WAL slide collection is a “multiple body” of practices creating a feminist “rhetorical space” for art work. The discussion proposes that the WAL slide collection maintains the artist’s slide in a politicized syntax of micro-politics of the everyday that produces feminist net-work on the issue of visibility for women artists. Feminist net-work is shown to be performed by the artist’s slide through the performative slide-writing practices discovered by the research. This has implications for the way the WAL slide collection’s feminist net-work continues in a digital format as a feminist project of visibility.

The WAL slide collection as political practices

Given that the WAL slide collection was set up as a feminist organization for change in our cultural, civil society, it remains to be determined whether the WAL slide collection continues to act as a performative political project. What have I discovered that makes the WAL slide collection a feminist intervention for the future?

Returning to the material WAL slide collection challenges standard digitization methods that reduce the valued content of slides to images alone. The slide mounts constitute an additional meta text produced by the artists that revises what a slide collection can represent along with the historical identity of the WAL as a political slide registry. The primary task at this point of the research is to draw back from the
material of the slide to gain a wider perspective looking at how the WAL slide collection transformed the slides it collected and continues to generate new meaning from the feminist syntax it created and preserves. The slide collection is a material through which we expect to “process the past”,¹ but the research repositions the slide collection material as a feminist past that is incomplete or “yet to come”² in the sense of the slides’ purpose remaining unfulfilled despite the successful creation of an extensive slide collection. Performative experiments have been used to test how the WAL slide collection embodies the process of ongoing issue-based net-work as well as how it keeps the evidence of its past success at amassing slides.

How does the slide give the woman artist agency to realize ideological and political change through engaging with the practicalities of self-documentation and building a slide library? Starting with the assertion that the slide mount is a performative space of communication for the artist, this final chapter follows with a discussion on how the WAL slide collection might be a performative space of communication that maintains the artists’ politicized work of self-representation.

The Slide Walk research recovered the slide mount and the artist at work with her slides. Using photography and experimenting in digital work spaces produced a creative practice that kept the research alert to the feminist work of the WAL and “closer to the everyday activities of those speaking, writing and doing politics, […] resonating with other communities than scholarly ones.”³ Arguing for practice-based research to political scientists, Christian Bueger’s observation suggests to me how research practice might be influenced by its politicizing subject. I initiated my research practice by fragmenting my work practice, breaking away from administrative responsibility to engage with the slide collection using the impulsive immersive Slide Walks. This fragmentation multiplied my perspectives on the WAL slide collection. I maintain that the Slide Walks produced new knowledges by reaching past the slides’ archive designation to reclaim the WAL artists’ slide

collection as a performative cultural voice. I would also argue that the Slide Walks produce a feminist disruptive methodology in the sense of blurring the relationship between the researcher and her subject whereby the WAL slide collection intervenes in my administration of it. Its resistant scale, unknown material and unexamined status prompted the research methodology which I argue is a feminist intervention in my ‘everyday’ work, to turn this work into an “everyday politics.” The Slide Walks thus signal a turn to art practice using research in a way that resonates with the community of women artists created by the slide files that represent their participation in feminist cultural politics. As one of the first artists to be involved in establishing the WAL slide collection, artist and educator Felicity Allen’s view is that there was no choice except for women to participate. She defines the artistic output of a woman artist’s multi-tasking career as cohering into a disoeuvre that encompasses the political as well as practical art work with artwork.

Lacking privilege and the object of prejudice, an artist needs to transform the infrastructure while also needing to earn an income, so the artistic work that makes up her Disoeuvre is considerably more complex than the objects produced from her studio.4

The performative nature of the research methodology activates the complexity of the slide object as it reflects how an artist’s art work is politicized to become an “every day activism” through the feminist net work of visibility politics. The WAL slide collection is unified by a socio-political ideal and sustained by a virtual and material network.

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4 Felicity Allen, “Creating the Disoeuvre – Interpreting Feminist Interventions as an Expanded Artistic Practice in Negotiation with Art’s Institutions” (Ph.D., University of Middlesex, 2016), http://felicityallen.co.uk/sites/default/files/Creating%20the%20Disoeuvre%20%E2%80%93%20Interpreting%20feminist%20Interventions%20as%20an%20expanded%20artistic%20practice%20in%20negotiation%20with%20art’s%20institutions.pdf, p. 41
Understanding how the WAL slide collection comes into being through multiple practices is inspired and informed by Anne-Marie Mol’s study, *The Body Multiple*, which describes how the disease athero-sclerosis is a body enacted by a multitude of practices. By introducing multiple perspectives as instances of enactment that produce the reality that is athero-sclerosis, Mol’s work provided me with an example of how I might approach the scale of the WAL slide collection as a body formed of thousands of artists’ individual practices. It was Mol’s methodology of following the multiple manifestations of the body (or disease) she was studying that suggested how the WAL slide collection could be followed, through the artists’ slide files, to see what it embodies. Mol describes the disparate representational practices - from patients’ descriptions of pain in the clinic to a specialist’s positive identification looking at cells under a telescope in a laboratory - all provide an accurate account of the same ‘body,’ the disease athero-sclerosis. This way of looking at the disease presents it as a performed entity of autonomous but converging practices which persuaded me to reconceive the inadequacy of standard slide digitization for the artists’ slides into one of a number of possible performances enacting the artist’s slide and the WAL slide collection. Mol’s praxiography or study of how these practices intersect and produce the subject of her research indicated how the autonomous but gathered artists’ slides generated the WAL slide collection, as a multiple body or space created by the everyday actions of diverse artists. The digitization and

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performative experiments with the artists’ slides recover slide making as the everyday practice that organized artists with divergent approaches to method and material into a politically coherent project.

The art slide registry was a strategy to focus and enhance the communicative capacity of slides, and provided an active site of organization for women artists inspired by the collective movement of women’s liberation politics gaining momentum in the 1970s. Women artists formed groups that supported their artistic practices through collaboration and sharing resources resulting in women artist slide registries substantiating productive networking. Through slide making the artist participated in the slide registry as a feminist social space, and by following ‘lines of performativity’ in the WAL slide collection suggests that the slide registry continues to embody the artist’s active participation in this feminist intervention. This performativity positions the WAL slide collection in an international arena of feminist cultural work.

The WAL slide collection was the first women artists’ slide registry in the UK, very likely inspired by feminist slide registry projects in the U.S.A. The staple-bound Xerox publication found uncatalogued in the WAL papers archive *Female Artists Past and Present* ⁶ lists slide registries in 1974 under the section The Contemporary Female Artists Movement under the heading of “Galleries, Museums and Slide Registries.” Of the 16 addresses accepting slides, three were collections based in educational institutions, and the rest were artists’ groups or women’s galleries, where the majority were based in individual’s homes. Meredith Brown writes that Lucy Lippard began the first slide registry of women artists in 1970 as part of the Ad Hoc Women Artists Committee and quotes her reasoning: “to counter institutions’ excuses that certain styles of art were not being made by women.” ⁷ Certainly by 1974 this strategy flourished in locations reaching from Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle to Chicago and Cleveland to Washington D.C., Boston, Philadelphia and New York.

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It is not a surprise that a ‘slide collective’ was mooted in London during this time\(^8\) when a small work group of women artists discussed the notion of a multi-purposed slide library running a lending scheme as well as membership/registry. It is not appropriate or necessary to this research to pinpoint a precise group of artists responsible for the original founding idea of the WAL slide collection. Archives in the WAL record discussions held in the early part of the 1970s proposed the creation of a slide library and slide projection events, while minutes of meetings held in 1978 relate more directly to what was eventually established as the Women Artists Slide Library in London.\(^9\) I would argue that the WASL arose from many discussions that expressed a widely perceived need in the U.K. to become more aware of other women artists’ work, initially as an autodidactic ‘awareness-raising’ about other women’s art practices. Along with the formation of women artists’ groups, the widespread use of slides also supported professional promotion. The slide registry therefore formed part of a matrix of cooperative communication between women artists as Meredith Brown describes. In the U.S., slide collection activities combined with the “non-localized newsletter” to become “especially effective in forging a women's art network across the nation through the systematic sharing of information.”\(^10\) The Women Artists Slide Library adapted this model to establish a network of artists and art historians by producing a newsletter in 1983 that provided information on women artists’ exhibitions and highlighted artist members’ practices. The publication developed into an internationally distributed magazine that was guided confidently by a series of editors towards exhibiting and groundbreaking women artists and feminist art scholarship and eventually away from membership sending in slides. However the first iteration as the *Women Artists Slide Library Newsletter* (1983-1986) was dedicated to the Women Artists Slide Library opening with reports from the coordinator Pauline Barrie and developed by Clare Rendell to include accounts of

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\(^8\) Women Artists Slide Collective, “History of the Women Artists’ Collective (Formerly Women’s Workshop of the Artists Union)” 1975, Early Feminist Movement in the UK papers, Slide Collective folder, The Women’s Art Library, Special Collections, Goldsmiths, University of London.


women artists’ exhibitions. Within the history of the publication, as Mo Throp and Maria Walsh write:¹¹

There is no doubt that in its days as a newsletter, […] the *Women Artists Slide Library Newsletter* was crucial in establishing networks of women artists at a time when there was a dearth of information and sites of exhibition. It was an indispensable resource for the dissemination of information about collectives such as Brixton Artists Collective and its sister group, Women’s Work […] as well as key exhibitions put on by the Women Artists’ Slide Library such as ‘Irish Women Artists: Eye to Eye’, Battersea Arts Centre, London, 1986.

This cut and paste newsheet featured the slide collection as a participatory network in the way described by Brown. She writes that it was not only important to make more slides of women’s art available for educational and curatorial use, they were “valuable resources to artists by exposing them to the diversity of art being made by women outside their local region.” The newsletters linked women artists overcoming isolation by creating networks and sharing “information […] to make ‘more headway altogether’ by knowing of each other’s activities in time to echo or support them”.¹²

From the mid-1980s the WAL engaged in publishing projects that distributed the slide images through different formats, working with commercial entities including the Women’s Press, which resulted in slides being reproduced in printed day diaries and image resource products like the microfiche titled *Contemporary Women Artists: Pictures from the Women Artists Slide Library*.¹³ These projects were often negotiated to promote the WAL as a membership arts organization with by-lines such as: “If you are a woman artist practicing in Britain or abroad we would like to represent your work.”¹⁴ However the first instance of a digital scanning project using slides from the WAL was an ambitious international project called The World's Women On-Line. This was curated by the artist Muriel Magenta, who was also an academic at the University of Arizona in 1995, “Utilizing the internet as a global

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exhibition format ...[focusing] attention on the vast resource of women's experience and culture.\textsuperscript{15} This web site is accessible and functioning at the time of this writing 17 years after its presentation at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Framed as a networking project this early iteration mirrors the ambition of the WAL slide collection.

The majority of instances where the WAL artist’s slide is published, her slide makes up a selection from the WAL slide collection that in some way represents ‘Women’s Art’ as a category extending beyond the WAL’s slide holdings. Projects wanting to feature “Women’s Art” as a kind of marketable genre, like for example the “British Women Artists Diary”\textsuperscript{16} and the “Contemporary Women Artists”\textsuperscript{17} microfiche, would come to the WAL for images. This suggests that during the late 1980s and 1990s, the WAL played a role in the popular conception of women’s art and this was actively promoted by the WAL as it strived to attract more artist members, as develop from “the only resource of its kind in the British Isles today” in 1987 to aim to “stimulate a new international interest in the work of women artists” by 1993.\textsuperscript{18}

The WAL’s artists slide collection in 2017 inevitably includes those who are no longer producing artwork and many whose work’s initial impact in the 1970s and 1980s is considered historical. Nevertheless, I have maintained a distinction between the ‘Contemporary Artists’ section of the WAL collection and the ‘Historical Artists’ section, just as the physical slide collection does. Both collections were significant to the political aim of WAL’s feminist project. The ‘Historical Artists’ section of the slide collection was developed by feminist art historians gathering images for teaching, making slides from publications and other sources that involved working with artists’ estates and institutions such as the Imperial War Museum. The consistent solicitation for artist members and volunteers to join the WAL that was especially evident through its publications, projected the slide collection as being open to and dependent on all women cultural producers to contribute to the project. A significant

\textsuperscript{16} British Women Artists Diary 1987.
\textsuperscript{17} Women Artists Slide Library (London, England), Contemporary Women Artists: Pictures from the Women Artists Slide Library.
\textsuperscript{18} International Women’s Art Diary 1993 (London: Open Letters, 1993).
example of an artist responding to this sense of a collective mission is the Pauline Boty (1938-1966) photographic project, Artist member Caroline Coon (with an extensive collection of her own transparencies in the slide collection) contacted the WAL to urge the organization to arrange a photographic recording of Pauline Boty’s oeuvre before it was dispersed at auction. With funding sourced by WAL, Coon oversaw the first set of transparencies to be produced of this important artist’s work for deposit in the Historical Artists section. This became the opening phase of an extended slide project (1996-1997) funded through the WAL, recording Boty’s entire artistic output led by art historian Sue Tate. Boty’s work has gained wider recognition through Tate’s sustained scholarship with publications, a major retrospective held in Wolverhampton Art Gallery and purchases of Boty’s work by the Tate. This example of a woman artist advocating an artist or historical project for inclusion in the WAL slide collection is one of many actions where the woman artist is an active feminist archivist.19

A small number of women’s art organizations produced slide kits, predominantly in response to the need to introduce women artists into their national art curriculum. The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington D.C., produced a teacher pack based on their collection, whereas the slide kits available from the Australian Women’s Art Register in Melbourne20 featured themed exhibitions and topics like women’s murals. The Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts)21 teaching slide pack featured important contemporary women artists who were inspiring the cultural shift towards recognizing marginalized art practices. Publishing slides was undertaken once by the WAL in 1994 when it produced a teaching pack working with educational specialists to curate a selection of works from international art collections that contextualized contemporary artists with historical women artists through topics such as ‘war’ and ‘identity’.22 The WAL’s slide collection included

slides packs produced by British museums to accompany exhibitions of women’s art, such as Echo\(^{23}\) and Women’s Work.\(^{24}\) Art historians building the WAL slide collection’s History section\(^ {25}\) surveyed the availability of slides of women's artwork, testing the museum world’s awareness of women artists in their collections as acquisition policies and exhibition programming was questioned.\(^ {26}\)

The WAL anticipated and supported the work of British campaigners such as Fanny Adams (1991-1993) and the Museum for Women’s Art project that sought to promote the visibility of neglected women's art in historical collections as well as attempt to


\(^{25}\) Nicole Veillard was the History Coordinator of the Women Artists Slide Library from 1984-1989 see Althea Greenan, “Nicole Veillard: Indebted to Her,” MAKE: The Magazine of Women’s Art, no. 74 (February 1, 1997): 30–31.

establish a dedicated museum. By 2000 online versions of slide registries were established in the U.S.A. including the Varo Registry of Women Artists in 1996 whose founder Robin Masi sought to use “the then new Internet technology to promote women artists.” The web sites presented emerging artists with established artists and links to historical sources or featuring women artists groups alongside cultural heritage collections. As digitally networked image resources become commonplace, the sense of diminished visibility however remains. Women continue to organize online artist registries for the same reasons that inspired the slide registries, as the British Women Artists website set up in 2009 states on its homepage. “BWA was set up as a means to extend the boundaries of what was perceived as important and of historic notability” in addition to its mission to provide a platform for women artists “encouraging collaboration and debate.”

![Screen shot of home page Britishwomenartists.com, accessed 7 May 2017](image)


Women artists registering their artwork continue to be engaged in the work of raising the visibility of women’s art practice and contextualize joining networks such as the BWA as a means of challenging the canon as well as promoting artwork.  

The various web sites described as registries today are typically idiosyncratic projects that in the networked setting do not appear networked in the sense of co-participation. Registry web sites make information about women artists available, but this aggregation of information online is an exercise in harvesting rather than a means of connection that promotes a sense of gaining visibility.  

A politicized registry such as The Women’s Art Register is exemplary as it creates a context for information on women artists that situates their practices within cultural heritage and is committed to provide “a vital arena and support” in the long-term as an organization of national importance. The web site does not digitally present its material collections, but instead presents the registry’s publication and membership’s

32 Australian Women’s Art Register, “Women’s Art Register Inc.”  
33 Ibid.  
34 The Women’s Art Registry was awarded with a National Library of Australia Significance, and describes itself as “one of only two such collections in the world, the other being the Women’s Art Library in London, now part of Goldsmith’s Library, University of London.”
activities with a link to forms for submitting to the image collection that includes CD-ROMs and well as slides.  

The WAL slide collection set up a feminist model for an information resource realized by participating artists whose slides today are redolent with new knowledge embodied in their materiality as much as their aggregated data. Even as digitization transforms our relationship to image making and information, it shifts our relationship to image collections, digitized or not. The WAL slide collection has become a significant cultural unit in the way that Lev Manovich implies.

The cultural unit is no longer a single image but a large scale structured or unstructured (such as the World Wide Web) image database.

The WAL slide collection was conceived as a cultural unit structured by its remit to represent women artists and unstructured in terms of who and how many they would be. It is more accurately understood today as a multiple body of practices, of which collecting images is just one aspect.

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35 The WAL also has web pages within the Goldsmiths university’s web site, with information for artists who might wish to submit documentation and forms to download and fill to accompany new material. This relates to copyright permissions for the material to be reproduced for educational use only. http://www.gold.ac.uk/make/artistsdocs/

The WAL slide collection is positioned as a ‘special’ collection in the University library’s Special Collections and Archives. This preserves the collection’s physical integrity, which signals and assures the WAL artists’ autonomy to represent themselves as self-identified practitioners. The WAL collection’s relocation to Goldsmiths began in 2003 as a result of a proposal of intent drawn up with input from Jacqueline Cooke, when her valuable understanding of the special qualities of the WAL collection was informed by her doctoral research focused on how alternative art spaces are represented by collections of art ephemera. She writes of her concern about the limits of library resources representing art practices.

As an art librarian, I am always aware that however many art books, magazines, slides and videos I acquire for the library, more actions, events and thoughts remain undocumented there, I realise that if I do not engage with this problem, not only will I be unable to provide current readers with information on the artists they are interested in, but my collections are likely to divulge only a simplified and reductive version of history, to future researchers.37

Cooke distinguished collections “conceived as independent resources […] compiled by support organisations for artists” - including the WAL collection - where “originating aims remain evident in the kind of materials they contain.”38 She compared traditional archives that were either ‘harvested’ or acquired as collections, to consider how the politics of the organizations’ documentation is represented.

PAD/D [Political Art Documentation and Distribution ] and the Women's Art Library/Make in contrast are presented as enterprises which worked with the format of the archive, to alter it. Both of these collections show how specific concerns and strategies can influence the form of the resulting resource.39

38 Ibid. p.146
39 Ibid.p.150
The feminist identity of the WAL collection continues to determine what is added to it and how it grows. Although the WAL slide collection lost its technical means to function as an image resource this does not alter the way the slides represent the “partisan engagement” that resulted in “a more cohesive collection” as Cooke noted. Nonetheless the demise of the slide as an artist’s communication tool changes how the collection works for the artist. The limits of digitization projects that reinstate ‘partisan’ slide collections as image resources, but archive the collections’ socio-political purpose. As Allan Sekula warned, “meaning and use” is easily lost in the process of becoming an archive.\textsuperscript{40} Sekula reflects on how the originary gaze that creates the photograph, for instance the scientific as opposed to the sentimental gaze, can become eclipsed in an archived collection seen to preserve images rather than photographic practices. Just as stock photography collections provide serviceable visual content, the WAL slide collection’s pool of images produce the illusion of an “abstract visual equivalence”\textsuperscript{41} of Women’s Art that both undermines the individual artist’s photographic intention to distinguish their artwork, and the political nature of the WAL slide collection. Sekula’s sensitivity to the susceptibility of the photographic archive reflects the urgency of this research to ensure that the WAL slide collection is understood as enacting politicized representation. Sekula’s view of the archive is that its apparent passive positioning is where “the difference, the radical antagonism” is conveniently lost so that,

Photographer, archivist, editor and curator can all claim, when challenged about their interpretations, to be merely passing along a neutral reflection of an already established state of affairs.\textsuperscript{42}

But as Cooke observed of the WAL as it functions in Goldsmiths’ Special Collections:

Now that books and journals do record this history, the ‘archival’ effect of the collection appears more clearly, as an archive of feminist artists, of women’s professional art practice, and as a record of a

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p.149
network of people which has acted to alter the idea of what an archive can be.43

The WAL slide collection shows this network at work, as they label their slides for a slide file that is grouped into a collective statement questioning how women are represented in those “secondary, critical, published and circulated” formats that constitute a current art mainstream. How much does this critical impact depend on the physical nature of the WAL slides as primary source material?

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43 Cooke, "Art Ephemera, aka Ephemeral Traces of ‘Alternative Space.’ ”
The Slide Walk sets up the research to focus attention on the physicality of the slides by magnifying individual details that point to an unknowable expanse of material. The WAL artist produced documentary slides that begin to problematise notions of cultural value once they enter the rhetorical space of the WAL slide collection. The importance of the slide’s photographic images framed by the artist’s slide writing is the way they combine to index women’s art practice through a performative gesture that points to a practice, to borrow from Green and Lowry’s observation that a photograph represents an event either by indexing it as a physical trace or as a
performative gesture that points to the event.\textsuperscript{44} The Slide Walk images show the haphazard digitization of the slide files as a performative gesture whose resulting digital shortfall points to women’s art practice as ultimately uncontainable.

Comparing the physical extent of the WAL slide collection’s 2500 artists in the “Contemporary” section to web sites such as Artworklife and The World’s Women On-Line, raises the question of how critically different is the experience of physical material produced by artists to representing women’s art as important cultural heritage? Is it desirable or does the kind of stripped back digitization that clears the evidence of women artists’ investment of labor, time and funds in her slides produce a more acceptable representation of cultural contribution? How is the argument for representation strengthened by evidence of artists participating in a communal action with other women artists?

I argue through my research that this collective activity needs to be as visible as the art works to carry the argument into the digital space that delivers our experience of artwork, to prevent these artists’ images from adding up to an “abstract visual equivalence” of Women’s Art. Instead this raw material reproduces the artists’ expression of autonomy. Cooke’s work with art ephemera observed how the activist artists’ collection challenges the authority of the “traditional” archive with the alternative authorization it secures from the multitude of practices it represents. The WAL slide mounts collected by the Slide Walks highlight the endorsement of the artists who practiced slide making and the hidden labor they invested in securing a space for collective self-determination. The WAL slide collection becomes a collective feminist rhetorical space in the politicized sense that Lorraine Code pictured.

... imagine trying to have a productive public debate about abortion in the Vatican in 1995, where there is no available rhetorical space, not because the actual speech acts involved would be overtly prohibited,

but because the available rhetorical space is not one where ideas on such a topic can be heard and debated openly, responsively.\(^{45}\)

2004. Emma Hedditch curates an exhibition at Cubitt in London, called ‘A Political Feeling, I Hope So’. In the space hangs a ‘separatist curtain’, made in collaboration with Henriette Heise, which the artists describe as ‘a homemade fantasy of fake differentiation’. Due to regulations around discrimination the gallery cannot be made into a woman-only space, but the curtain reminds participants of this idea. The exhibition consists of film screenings, reading groups, meetings and a journal that includes contributors’ reflections on their feminist pasts and desires. The text introducing the project reads: ‘For three days Cubitt gallery will become a feminist autonomous place (that is, we will commit to that idea).\(^{46}\)

In this passage, Catherine Grant relates how a collection of gestures successfully stakes out a feminist autonomous space in 2004. The artist’s wording is particular and highlights the tenacity that shapes political practices that result in a physical


collection/space like the WAL. Cooke observes how this piece of writing or ephemera works:

Emma Hedditch has taken herself (socially, politically, her way of working) to the Space [the Cubitt gallery], temporarily replacing its own institutional identity. The (at least we will commit...) phrase is what for me describes the complexity in this example, it acknowledges distance, without lessening the integrity. The 'we' is fluid, there are different participants in the different events.47

The WAL slide collection is founded on a similar manoeuvre where women artists produce their socio-cultural identity using the institution of the slide library to replace the dominant canon. Artists commit their slides to the idea of a resource on women artists, acting on a political feeling. The slide collection preserves the individual artist’s slide file as an autonomous space establishing space for women artists. The WAL slide collection validates the artists and their artwork as the artists who contributed slides built a context of women’s art practice that not only endures as a physical entity, but also as a ‘rhetorical space’. Lorraine Code defines the concept of ‘rhetorical space’ in her work on gendered locations.48

[...] fictive but not fanciful or fixed locations, whose (tacit, rarely spoken) territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them with a reasonable expectation of uptake and ‘choral support’, an expectation of being heard, understood, taken seriously.49

The WAL slide collection continues as it began, as a response to the rhetorical space of a politically disengaged art world largely indifferent to the feminist discourse on women’s visibility. Although the slides are a historical example of how women supported feminist politics of visuality in the 1970s-2000, the WAL slide collection as a concept as well as a physical entity also materializes a contemporaneous

48 Lorraine Code, Rhetorical Spaces p.ix
‘rhetorical space.’ Regardless of whether they are digitally accessible or not, the slides are complex objects of practice, which in the context of the WAL slide collection are the “utterances that can be voiced” that Code describes above. This concept of utterance is key because she suggests that Knowledge is created in spaces where different voices are recognized and received. The practice of recognition and reception is performed during each Slide Walk re-performing the artist’s act of recording her artwork for the gendered location of the WAL. Across the collection of over 2000 different artists’ slide files in the “Contemporary” section alone, there’s a rich context for the performative digital work as the WAL slide collection produces Code’s “textured location” from which to draw out new knowledges.

The WAL slide collection is a location that new forms of digitization brings texture to, by emphasizing the importance of the collective dynamic and how antagonistic voices can be maintained in a productive relationship. The research produces a performative discourse from the WAL slide collection that is based on recording as receiving. Code reiterates the importance of receptiveness:

[… ] discourse becomes a poeisis, a way of representing experience, reality, that remakes and alters it in the process. And that making is ordinarily a communal process, dependent for its continuance on receptive conditions, on engaged responses both favorable and critical.

The notion that the WAL slide collection is an autonomous feminist space because of its role as a rhetorical space for women artists suggests that the WAL slide collection is producing knowledge and remaining active beyond its function as an image resource.

Nearly 15 years after the WAL ceased operating as an artists’ organization, the slide collection retains its ‘institutional identity’ and its ‘political feeling’ and identifies the other collections in the WAL as an extension of the autonomous feminist space it creates. My role as curator of the WAL collection develops a programme of

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50 See Appendix A
51 Lorraine Code, Rhetorical Spaces, p.x
52 Ibid. p.x
academic and art projects based on the perception of the WAL as a feminist space. Carla Cruz presented her 2012 All My Independent Women programme in collaboration with the WAL and later described it – along with other spaces such as a bookshop and a choreography studio inside a fire station – as ‘marginal’ rather than part of a recognized ‘alternative’ art world, thereby offering a creative vantage point for her feminist critical work. She links her use of such spaces with active feminist practice, in contrast to the institutional treatment of feminism, “as an historical and concluded art movement rather than as another way of ‘doing and making’.”[^53]

The Slide Walks activate the slide collection by highlighting women artists ‘doing and making’ the WAL. The Slide Walks’ open-ended tracings register the political participation of individual artists and through performativity destabilizes the fixedness of the slide collection as a feminist historical archive that inevitably politicizes the artists’ slides retrospectively. The Slide Walks recover the marginal space of the slide mount and by digitally visualizing the extent of artists ‘doing and making’ they bring an overlooked feminist methodology into a digitally distributed frame.

**The transformative WAL slide collection: micro-politics of the everyday**

The WAL slide is a tangible response to the issue of equal representation for women’s art. The slide mount represents the significant personal investment of administration time and effort that is part of the everyday of art practice that would have involved distributing many copies of slides to other registries, galleries and open calls. What persists in the WAL slide collection is their decision to also send slides to represent themselves in the WAL. This distinguishes the WAL artists as the type of politicized individual that Sarah Pink observed adapting their everyday routine to make a positive impact on environmental sustainability.[^54] “It is possible to understand everyday life as a site that has equal potential for activist practices as those of a global political arena.”[^55] This concept of participating in feminist work through making and

[^53]: Carla Cruz, ”Democracy: A (Non) Artistic Intervention?: Attempts to Perform Democracy through Art” (Ph.D., Goldsmiths College (University of London), 2015), http://research.gold.ac.uk/12485/.
[^55]: Ibid.p.5
sending slides to the WAL collection is important to recognizing how the artist changes the slide into a politicizing object. The slide becomes the woman artists’ means of activist practice when there is the option to submit it to a feminist project that is developing the potential for change in women’s visibility as cultural producers. If the WAL slide collection offers this transformative space as a feminist visuality, it represents a potential for change even now when slide technology is obsolete. The implication of the research is that digitization opens the WAL slide collection to new ways of performing it that extends the rhetorical space, not by adding new artists but by discovering new depth to the material.

My research practice exploring the “multiple body” of the WAL slide collection introduces a “critical-poetic density”56 to the slide collection that reimagines the slides’ function. This notion of critical-poetic density – as outlined by psychoanalyst and curator Suely Rolnik – I interpret as the archive object’s capacity for political affect. If the slide collection archives women artists’ feminist political practices in addition to their images of artwork, then the Slide Walks’ open experience of the slide files’ materiality is a feminist performance of the collection re-enacting the original “critical-poetic density” imagined for the WAL slides.

[...] politics should be distinguished on the basis of the poetic force that an archiving device can transmit rather than on that of its technical or methodological choices. I am referring here to their ability to enable the archived practices to activate sensible experiences in the present, necessarily different from those that were originally lived, but with an equivalent critical-poetic density.57

The Slide Walk approach to digitization activates the WAL slide to serve a “performative rather than a memorative purpose”58 and becomes a feminist methodology to explore the collection as “sensible experiences” of feminist positivist action in the present.

56 Suely Rolnik, Archive Mania (Distributed Art Pub Incorporated, 2011).
Women artists adapted the slide registry to question the art system, generating an alternative space for their slides rather than an alternative system of documentation. Now the system of representation through slides has been destabilized by digital alternatives, I would argue that it is the performative aspect of the WAL slide collection that generates the collection’s feminist position. Both digital and analogue performances of the material of the slide collection reproduce the collection’s feminist syntax of polyvocality which it continues to produce as well as preserve. The materiality of the slides produce a consistency of articulation and to consider how they can ‘speak’ so persistently and exert “a political feeling” I found it useful to think of the WAL slide collection in terms of political theorist Jane Bennett’s writing on the “political ecology of things.” Although the WAL slide collection is a material that appears to be losing its capacity to represent and promote contemporary women’s art, it produces enduring political ferment by being incomplete. Rolnik describes this as the “micro-political potency that is immanent to artistic practice” and as no single individuals’ work, the mass of the WAL slide collection material produces a culturally resistant disquiet.

The issue of visibility is not resolved by proliferating images of artwork without questioning the space of encounter and what else besides artwork these images not only trace but point to. The WAL slide collection is a feminist project based on reproducing artwork. Art reproduction enables alternative and culturally empowering experiences of art. Griselda Pollock’s encounter with a “banal” set of postcards initiates a feminist analysis of what these images convey. The process produces a rhetorical space of feminist cultural work, the “virtual feminist museum” that is conjured through encounters with art as reproduced images. Pollock describes the feminist intervention as one that “seeks to elaborate other visualities and rhetorics – not of curatorially ordered, and pedagogic display, but of encounter […]”

The Slide Walk practice research photographed encounters with the art practices of women artists that reproduced the mounted slides along with the artwork, and suggest how the feminist art slide registries accumulated sets of images from artists as distributable photographic evidence in response to the privileging of encounters with 'original' artwork in the museum or gallery space. The Slide Walk does not display the WAL artist but reproduces her entire set of images to read like snapshots from a continuum of practice as the WAL artist was represented by as many slides as she wanted to submit.
At the same time, the Slide Walks reveal the slides as unique artists’ productions as well as reproductions, complicating what we ‘see’ as documented or the process of documenting. The sources are so diverse – each artist presenting a distinct body of practice at different moments of career development – that the material resists being organized into a chronology or a legible historical framework. Even as dated material, the way artists inscribes this information on the slide mounts mostly convey the fluidness of notation. As Cooke considers the value of art ephemera she suggests how such collections need to be acknowledged as historic sources even as they challenge the idea of a secured knowledge:
[...] from identification of the ‘archive’ as an ‘inert’ space holding authorised history, the deposited sediment of ‘order’ opposed to live social space, but if history is seen as narratives drawn from the potential diversity of past events, multiple sources have more value. [...] evidence of an endless diversity of pasts, presaging a diversity of virtual futures, and histories. 

The WAL artist’s slide becomes a complex object of conveyance of practices as it becomes the ephemera of the event of an artwork, an artist, an art practice, a slide collection, a political intervention, a political ideal. The research focuses on the WAL slide as the ‘epistemic thing’ that generates the questions that this study follows and prompts these alternative performances in both analogue and digital settings. The WAL slide unfolds into multiple practices that “transgress any simple material-immaterial division of knowledge. They are bound to but are not dependent on these materials.” The research methodology re-presents the WAL slide as an object crafted for participation in a feminist knowledge-making project that digitization redrafts to consider what knowledges and performances or implementations are bound by its material of film, mount and labelling. The research finds that in addition to representing artwork, the slide is a site for artists to imprint and communicate their practices into spaces outside their studios using it as a tool for gaining visibility. The Slide Walk image conveys the knowledge, technique and communicative properties of the original slide, but the Slide Walks’ collection of images do not work on behalf of the artists in the same way as the WAL slide collection.

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62 “Rheinberger’s “epistemic things” are objects used in scientific research which are “open, question-generating, and complex”, can be processes as well as things, and have a complexity that increases under academic analysis rather than reducing or decreasing.” “conceptsinsts - Epistemic Objects (Hubbell),” accessed April 18, 2017, https://conceptsinsts.wikispaces.com/Epistemic+objects+(Hubbell).
The folders of images are kept in the order of their production, as sets of data in a personal digital holding space, acting as objects for my participation in research but not on behalf of the artists. Alternative modes of digitization reveal how the WAL artists’ slides produce a feminist syntax through being collected, making their digitized reproductions incomplete until they are restored to a space of reception and recognition connecting women artists. As the WAL slide casts the woman artist as a producer of new knowledges, the WAL slide collection casts her as a political participant. The collection produces knowledge within a “[poetics of connection]”64 a space in which to receive the knowledges and understand women’s art practices as a collective expression. The epistemic thing of the WAL artist’s slide can be instantiated digitally but not isolated from the expanse of the collection because it is a tool for participation and the collection embodies this action, or net-work.

The artist’s slide produces the WAL slide collection as an issue network

I would argue that the WAL slide collection is organized around the political issue of visibility for women artists in a way that identifies the WAL as a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) consolidating artists’ slides into an action for change. Accepting the slide as an “information communication technology”65 I turn to the work of

Noortje Marres, who writes more generally on how objects enable political participation including how “the crafting and handling of things are suggestive of new, inventive techniques for organizing political and ethical collectives.”66 This takes the research discussion towards a rethinking of how the artist’s slide’s performativity might be digitally evolved.

I believe the research discovers that the WAL artist’s slide is an enduring material object with "the capacity to inspire, disturb, provoke and surprise in politically and morally significant ways"67 because of where it is located now, physically secured in an institute of higher education, and temporally in a milieu dominated by digital imagery. The slide expresses the artists’ engagement with feminist cultural politics by combining self-documentation with self-promotional practice to assert the longterm visibility of her artwork. The WAL artist slide as a material object of participation now represents the political necessity of collecting women artists’ slides more than slides just reproducing women’s art. Raising awareness of contemporary women’s art practice galvanized artists to contribute to the WAL slide collection and the urgency to collect more artists along with documentation follows a familiar pattern for civil society initiatives, including the women artists slide registries that emerged in response to the women’s movement in the 1970s and 80s. An artist was most likely to engage with the WAL slide collection as a participant in co-action rather than as a donor to a research resource. Marres’ description of what is likely to engage the public in environmental issues could also describe on what terms most artists sent slides to the WAL.

Rather than seeking to increase people's knowledge about environmental issues, these initiatives focus on action and impact - on what people can do about the issues in question. And the focus on everyday material action, in turn, enables a set of distinctive ideals of participation to be deployed.68

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67 Ibid.p1
68 Ibid.p3
The way the artist had a direct impact on the issue of visuality was to enhance the slide collection with her slides, and her activism emerged from her personal or everyday workspace through her slides. The difference between Marres’ and Pink’s understanding of participation in activism is how the activism rooted in the everyday extends to civil society organization. What is useful in terms of considering slides as politicized objects, is Marres emphasise on the role of information in activism and how it is given shape and enacted through the technology that individuals adopt and adapt to participate in issue-based networks pressing for social change. The WAL slide collection is an adaptation of the technology of 35mm slides to produce a feminist intervention focused on the issue of visibility.

Today this issue-based network survives as a unique resource of images - a new ‘cultural unit’ - but also as a network of artists represented by an outdated information communication technology. What does this imply for the characterization of the WAL slide collection as a site of participation? Firstly, that if digitization takes the form of creating digital images of slides isolated from the rest of the collection it cannot represent the full meaning of the WAL artist’s slide as a tool of participation. What follows is the second implication suggested by digitization, is that a digitized WAL slide collection needs a digitized ideal of participation, an adapted technology for action. The WAL as a feminist issue-based network project is a CSO working towards equal visibility for the cultural contribution of women artists. The WAL slide collection holds the artists slides within this ongoing feminist net-work as the issue of equal visibility for women artists persists in other contemporary cultural projects from artists groups to collections to displays and ongoing feminist art scholarship. The WAL slide collection as a civil society group keeps the work of the artists’ slide making actively performing the work of raising visibility. The research question raised by the Slide Walks and other performances of the WAL slide collection is how to continue the performative net-work of the slides in a digitized network space.

A slide registry established to highlight a socio-political aspect of art collects slides from artists who identify with this positioning, but for the artist making and distributing slides to promote her practice, would routinely send them to more than
one registry. The WAL collection's heading of 'women's art' was as much a comment on the biased professional environment that women artists were experiencing as a promotional heading. The WAL effectively networked the various social issues that the practicing women artists brought into view either through their work and/or through their decision to join the WAL. In her essay "Net-Work Is Format Work: Issue Networks and the Sites of Civil Society Politics" Marres provides a way of understanding how a group, in this case women artists asserting the visibility of women’s art, is a network that enacts its political work for change in civil society by distributing information through an information network to a social network. It is crucial to consider how the digitized environment such as the internet, appears to conflate the information and social networks. Marres works to "consider how these technologies are and may be integrated into these practices, operating upon their substance.” This research turns on this question of “substance” as it unpacks the slide as an epistemic thing manifesting in multiple analogue and digital forms and raising questions about what constitutes a WAL artist’s slide – the image, the writing, the positioning in a feminist collection, in a university library, etc. – that might resist digitization. But the substance of the issue-based network that formed through the slides – e.g. the performative practices of participation set up by the WAL slide collection around which women artists cohere – demands an approach to collection digitization that takes into account how digital technologies operate on the substance of the WAL network.

The Women Artists Slide Library was a networking political project using the operative information communication technology (ICT) for artists at the time of slides and from the early 1980s effectively re-framed the issue of women artists' participation in the professional sphere of cultural production and art education. The slide library provided a platform for these women artists to become “network actors” without leaving their practice behind, i.e. without for instance having to take on additional “everyday material practices” such as campaigning to the detriment of their artistic practice. They joined the WASL and later the WAL through the process of submitting slides as they would any other slide registry, but recognized the WAL

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71 Marres, Material Participation.
as a social issue network that highlighted and reframed the myriad issues of parity for women artists. Marres refers to Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's study on advocacy networks to consider acts of participation as instances when “Network actors actively seek ways to bring issues to the public agenda by framing them in innovative ways and by seeking hospitable venues.”\(^2\) Marres remarks that “by choosing new frames, that is, new labels and keywords, and we might add, new formats – an issue may acquire resonance in political circles and public spheres.”\(^3\)

Digitization implicates more than content migration, to also constitute net-work as Marres defines it, to become a means of reformatting the way in which the WAL slide collection produces resonance between women artists as well as visibility. While the focus on labels and keywords and frames does evoke how images of artwork are digitally networked through text, and how ICTs facilitate social networking through images.\(^4\) it is important to resist viewing a slide collection like the WAL to be well-served or better represented by digitization because it connects to a boundless network of images, i.e. an undifferentiated info-network. Marres’ analysis of the role of the digital ICT within political discourses and activities looks beyond their effective use of ICTs to how the networking achieves political aims, from “building partnerships” to “awareness raising” on one end of the spectrum, and “making friends” and “sharing knowledge” on the other.\(^5\) Do these activities thrive simply because the ICT you use is effective?

Considering the ubiquity [email, web sites] of these networking activities in the civil society sector, and the obvious merits of ICTs in this respect, it is in some sense ridiculous to question the usefulness of the concepts of the “social network” and the “info-network” to explain why ICTs matter to CSOs. However, it is far from self-evident that the politics of civil society can be understood in these terms.\(^6\)


\(^3\) Marres, “Net-Work Is Format Work: Issue Networks and the Sites of Civil Society Politics.”


\(^6\) Ibid.
In other words, social connectivity does not describe how CSOs “intervene in public debates.” Instead it is how these networks can support its participants in what Marres describes as “antagonistic relations.” This concept evokes how the analogue collection of slides continues to articulate political agitation through the syntax created by the artists’ slides’ individual expressions within the receptive space of the WAL collection. The WAL slide collection produces a new visibility for women artists that is politically performative in that it frames the slides as working towards a collective goal. The issue of how women artists lacked visibility and recognition was articulated every time an artist confirmed the significance of the WAL by acting on the decision to send slides of her work to the collection despite, or perhaps because of, the variableness of the context of a women’s art library. The politically effective network is the one that retains the “antagonistic relation” of differences because articulation is the political work. Political declarations were not sought from artists and artists’ statements focus on art practice, making the slide the “active mediator” of each artist’s involvement in the WAL, as in the sense that Marres suggests the ICT is the “active mediator[s] of civil society practices” that is “constitutive issue forming”. The WAL slide collection activates the slide to give form to the issue of the visibility of these women’s art practices. The political effectiveness of the WAL slide collection is generated by retaining the “antagonisms” between messages and viewpoints that the slides embody, rather than becoming a seamless flow of information sharing. Marres description of the necessity for antagonisms for articulating issues to produce an issue network recalls Lorraine Code’s concept of a “textured location” which I apply to the WAL slide collection. The issue of visibility for women’s art practice is constituted as the importance of who or what speaks on behalf of the artist and communicated by the distinctive physical features of artists’ slides. The Slide Walk research including the slides’ mounts disturbs the flow of information sharing that focused on the artwork even as it enhances the detail of that information. The Slide Walk digital image reveals the slide as a compelling information communication technology that retains a discoverable voice and articulates women artists’ practices to produce a body of active material that speaks of the issue of visibility and embodies feminist net-work. Does this enable that digital image to articulate this feminist net-work in digital spaces of experience?
Feminist net-work across analogue and digital writings of the WAL slide collection

Marres describes how articulation or use rather than the technology alone defines and produces issue net-work. Her example is an urgent news notice that is distributed as a PDF rather than emailed personally as a news release along with an invitation to share the news release with others. The choice of format needs personalized formatting to not just distribute information but encourage the net-work to continue or “contribute to issue formation. [...] thereby opening up a space for intervention that otherwise would have remained closed.”  

This difference between a fixed PDF and a targeted news release enabled for instant sharing, makes an awkward but potential reference for what might remain closed of a slide collection's “space for intervention” as a consequence of normative digitization. Marres’ description of the PDF as a constrained articulation compared to the personalized email, for me produces a comparison with the normative digitization of slide collections like those displayed in the Visual Arts Data Service web site.  

As a means of digitally communicating a politically motivated slide collection such as the WAL, a digitized image database is not a site than can be written in the sense that I suggest each artist site-writes the WAL when she reinforces her presence in the slide material through the act of writing. The information of the slide collections preserved and presented by the VADS is too seamless to allow deviant, additional personalized articulations that reproduce the issue net-work as a series of active commitments. As they authenticate their work and authorship, artists engage directly with the issue of visibility. There is no formula to slide mounting in the WAL slide collection that limit artists to typewritten labels, colour codes, etc. The freely inscribed spaces of the slide collection today show artists writing their works into the matrix of descriptive terms for artworks, and their names in a way that is between dispassionate block script and a purely gestural signature. It is especially the name that becomes not only legible but distinctly drawn, and the slide mount becomes a signed document, a communication.

77 Ibid.
and a signed consignment of the slide from the private workspace to the public viewing space of the WAL. VADS prioritizes display and enables ‘free’ access to image collections that set every image within a frame of text data and every view within the web site template with each collection branded by appropriate logos. What meanings does this reconfiguration of, for example, the African-Asian Visual Artists Archive slide collection lose? This screenshot of a digitized slide of Janie Conley’s work from the AAVAA collection shows how the artwork depicted is richly described, like an artist’s statement, personalizing the content of the image. However, there is no narrative or context for how the slide became part of the AAVAA collection, framing the experience of the work with suppositions that the artist is
black or Asian, with no other nuanced understanding about her presence in an important identity-based issue network slide collection.  

The slide itself might not appear to yield more quantitative information, but losing the slide mount also loses the presence of the social networking action of writing that slide mounts show. Without seeing the slide in its entirety, the digital image effectively distances the artist from the digitized space reproducing her work. The digital separation and then re-organization of text to image that characterizes the slide collection as visual art data loses the variation of legibility and surges of expressiveness that create difference and plurality in the slide mounts’ framing of the artwork. The slide mounts are integral to the slide’s effectiveness as an ICT enabling individual’s slide making dissimilarities to remain evident as well as connected in this work of making women’s art practice visible. Regardless of the fact that the 35mm diapositive slide is no longer in common use, the WAL artist’s slide continues to

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work as an ICT that forms the issue of visibility for women’s art practice. The artists’ inscriptions on the slide mount personalizes the slide’s communication of self-identification as a practicing artist. Extending beyond the slide mounts’ purpose to enable the physical handling and distribution of the slides, the research establishes how the mount also clears a “space for intervention” or the collective “noise” that grows the issue net-work. Normative digital reformatting flattens those antagonisms that produce different authorities and the receive visibility as a contested right.

When the slide is digitally taken apart and reassembled in a space like the VADS web site, it stops being the artist’s ICT and becomes content for a digitized educational information service rather than an information network. The Slide Walk research produced digital images of the slides but these images do not reproduce the slide collection as an artists’ issue-based network. The Slide Walk image does not function as a digital form of ICT for the artist who participated in the feminist project of the WAL slide collection. Digital images sent to the WAL collection on CD-ROM perform as ICT on behalf of the artists, but the collection is dispersed amongst artist files and has no presence or coherent space in the library that begins to approach the scale of the WAL slide collection.

![Figure 18 CD-ROM received for inclusion in the Women's Art Library from the artist Jan Wurm in February 2017](image)

Although a CD-ROM’s store of images would have demanded a significant investment of time and administration labouring in a digitized workspace, the
resulting ICT is not inscribed with the legible performative intensity that a comparable set of slides would be.

The WAL slide collection preserves the women artists’ issue-based net-work invested through the performative slide writing. The research reconceives the WAL artist’s slide as a pre-digital ICT to productively complicate the notion of digitization as a one-way process migrating the analogue to digital format to unfold the multiple practices that produce the WAL slide collection as a performative feminist net-work. Thus, the hypothetical, institutional or experimental moment of transfer into the digital environment can be viewed as an opportunity to not just reformat content but explore the model of a political project based on the slide as a distinctive, well-designed analogue ICT. Digitization is – to borrow Marres’ term – “format-work”, that does not challenge how useful it would be to populate digital information networks with WAL slides as a collection of documentation to be distributed as a historical resource. But it does challenge how sensitively and critically aware any formatting needs to be of what is being communicated by the material it digitizes. The analogue slide collection is dormant rather than obsolete and it continues to give material form to the ongoing issues around the visibility of women's art practice through a poetics of connection that the artists politicized from the beginning of the collection.

[…] the 'issue network' proposes that participants in such a network are connected to one another by way of the particular issue with which
it is concerned. […] [in the context of the issue network], the issues take on special importance as providing, enabling, or even necessitating, connections among actors.\textsuperscript{80}

The slide represents the issue of whose art is reproduced as well as the politicized practice of self-documentation and promotion that women artists engaged in.

**Conclusion**

Considering the WAL slide collection as a rhetorical space allows for the development of the significance of the slide mounts, inscriptions, and other contextual data which are superficially marginal to the core function of the WAL. The notion that the collection asserts an autonomous political space arises from looking at the WAL as a “partisan collection”\textsuperscript{81} politicized by the way women artists collected slides in response to feminist politics of visuality. The WAL slide collection frames the artists’ participation in the creation of a slide collection of women’s art as a political action, and Noortje Marres’ theoretical model of issue networks offers a clear description of the slide’s role. It allows for the explicit connection of slide making with political activism, making artists network actors and the WAL slide collection a continuous rhetorical space for socio-cultural change. The importance of how the slide collection is performed in digital spaces is considered in terms of the feminist net-work continuing as format work that engages with the way the WAL slide collection changes the artists’ slide to articulate the issue of visibility for women artists across digital as well as analogue encounters.

\textsuperscript{80} Marres, “Net-Work Is Format Work: Issue Networks and the Sites of Civil Society Politics.”

\textsuperscript{81} Cooke, “Art Ephemera, aka "Ephemeral Traces of 'Alternative Space.'”
CONCLUSION

My research project produced an open rather than conclusive proposal regarding how the Women’s Art Library slide collection should be reconceived in a digital future. The research practice that I developed re-imagines the material of the slides in ways that invite further performances to explore the way the slide collection continues to represent artists today. Through practice I propose that the collection is more accurately conceived as a restless entity rather than a coherent one, made up of those essential “antagonistic relations”¹ that keep socio-political networks alive to debate, as Noortje Marres describes. At the same time the clumsiness of my research practice performances of, for example, digitizing slides as a flipbook, reproduce a feminist malaise that I own as my particular antagonism or discomfort with reading the WAL slide collection as a fixed archive. This is the politicized malaise Suely Rolnik describes as, “the need to express what does not fit into the current map, to create new meanings that are the condition for life to flow again,”² and inspired the undertaking of this doctoral project. My research centred on the question of what more does an artist’s slide represent besides artwork, motivated by a sense that important knowledges had yet to be released from the WAL slide collection.

I devised a performative process of questioning the material of the slide collection using digitization, and this is key to my original contribution to knowledge. My research not only contributes to archival research methods applied by students and artist researchers, but also broadens the perspective of archive curators and image collection managers engaged with the formation of digital cultural heritage. The research contributes to the interdisciplinary discussion provoked by artists’ innovative work engaging with archives, intersecting with debates centred in institutions about the particular challenges of archiving art practices alongside the need to attract users into Special Collections. The research demonstrates the potential of the slide

2 Suely Rolnik, Archive Mania (Distributed Art Pub Incorporated, 2011).p.8
collection to critically expand approaches to and expectations from its digitization, and this is relevant to designing user experiences of online platforms representing cultural heritage collections and digital projects that focus on developing collections as “living” archives.

The inventive new readings that the research draws from a slide collection of self-documenting artists is important for the communities of students and academics critiquing the diversity of art education curricula as we scrutinize how cultural heritage is determined. The practice element especially uses the collection to question how institutional programmes of digitization contextualize material collections. I have presented this research in response to invitations from academics teaching feminist methodologies, curators revisiting early photographic practices, students interested in examples of cultural activism, and art librarians and archivists investigating ways to make art-related archives perform in both physical and digital spaces. My methodology also offers a provocation to those researchers and policymakers currently looking at how we research and produce digital cultural heritage shared internationally. This dissertation not only raises questions about how we treat our remaining slide collections as cultural legacy, it implicates other political collective assemblages of art documentation and the importance of taking account of how the documents enact political work to preserve this knowledge for future teaching and research. I see my dissertation as contributing to critical thinking reviewing cultural information management engaged with developing teaching and research resources prompted by new research methodologies arising from digital art history.

I initially focused my methodology on recording the moment a slide comes into view without separating it from the artist’s file or the WAL collection because I needed to experience and then identify how the collection produced its feminist framework. While these photographs might resemble reflective art work, they are better described

3 See Accompanying Material and Appendix 2

4 See my paper “From Slide Collection to Feminist Net-Work: Digitization as a Deviant Performance to Recover the Politics of a Moribund Technology” presented at the Researching Digital Cultural Heritage International Conference, Manchester, 30th November – 1st December 2017
as a mode of personalized critical digitization intended to disrupt the academic containment of the WAL slide collection and form a feminist intervention. The research is artistic and practice-led in order to find a perspective outside the disciplines of art history and information science to bring to the collection and produce new meanings speaking to a future including digitized communication. Thus, the research practice did not result in a solution to the inadequate process of digitization that separated slides’ images from their mounts, but practiced digitization as a “noisy” provocation in the context of photographic archives and cultural legacy, where digitization is more usually applied to develop networked access. The Slide Walk images visualized overlooked residual layers in the slide collection, making this adaptation of digitization into an investigative tool. Digitization was used to deconstruct digital work into distinct practices, starting with the photographer as digitizer, showing how the slide represented artists’ hidden labour and adaptive use of the slide to participate in a feminist cultural politics. This formed the research into a feminist intervention on my part and offers this methodology centred on marginalia and alternative approaches to digitization to subsequent feminist researchers approaching cultural collections. I drew on social science research to conceptualize the practice as a performative process of investigation, or “inventive methodology”\(^5\) interrogating the WAL slide collection as a community’s collective endeavour. The notions of plurality, political participation and the artist engaged with net-work, are important sociological perspectives that supported this research in a theoretical framework that it also contributes to.

I devised an artistic research methodology that draws on art practice, but refrains from producing an art work. Equally, I reference practices from image collection management, but I am not resurrecting the slide librarian’s role. The research responds to my sense of responsibility to the slide collection’s provenance as the work of women artists contributing to a feminist project whose recognition is difficult to achieve across the 2,000+ artists represented by the slides. I approached the collection as a unique entity, making it strange without fetishizing the 35mm slide or using my experience of working professionally with the collection to select “interesting” or exemplary slide files. My solution was to devise an artistic symbolic

process of re-enacting the individual artist’s slidemaking work, and undertaking “walks” through the collection. The possibility of finding new meaning by encompassing and endorsing the slide collection in this way overtook the desire to produce a successful reworking of digitization practices. Therefore, the research did not result in a method of digitizing the slide collection that seamlessly reproduces the artists’ slide files to perform in a networked space. Investigating how all 35mm art slide collections are digitized would have drawn on resources and expertise beyond my professional role and experience, but my concentration on the Women’s Art Library enabled me to produce a feminist critique inspired by how the WAL slide collection presents a political and physical challenge to standard digitization. The research found that its complexity and scale disallowed a singular digital re-formation of the WAL slide collection and steered towards a more prismatic notion of digitization as producing expanded performances of the slide collection. In this sense, the spontaneous digitization recorded by the Slide Walks signals a regeneration of the slide collection on a trajectory of ongoing reappearances, just as a recorded spoken reading of a poem produces a fresh iteration of a printed text rather than replacing it.

The performances ensuing from the Slide Walks suggest a return to the rich tangible qualities of the slide collection by complicating the digital encounter that brings about more than an acceptance of a digital surrogate. The importance of reviewing the physical slide collection alongside its digitized iterations is reaffirmed in the spirit of the Florence Declaration and protecting photographic collections, but the research method also expands on material physicality using digital manipulation. The full implications of my methodology were not exhausted as it was beyond the scope of this investigation to draw more from the vivid and resonant material of the artist’s slide mount and unpack the distinguishing features of individual artists’ slides. Without extending the research into the artist’s membership records and correspondence and other forms of documentation, this analysis would have been speculative within the context of this thesis. Instead, my argument uses digitization to connect these women artists’ slides to the wider picture of feminist issue-based work, in which the plurality of women’s art practice can be seen as a force pressing for change. The slides and the art work they embody as well as the artwork they depict can now be appreciated as giving space to the vital interplay that makes the slide
collection a site for the: “small-scale, local and transitory, encouraging the interplay of multiple voices rather than replacing one dominant voice by another.” This is a feminist research project paying special attention to this notion of plurality, using an artistic research practice to re-conceive the WAL slide collection as a dynamic entity or net-work. This research project presents a broader understanding of women artists’ cultural production to include political participation through art documentation and feminist organization. It remains for future research to explore the depth of that plurality as an important aspect of cultural diversity and knowledge, and to contribute new ways of inhabiting and developing the rhetorical space that the WAL slide collection opens.

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APPENDICES
Appendix 1 – The objects

During the practice research three art objects were created to explore how the texts of the artists’ slides might be transmediated and performed through different materials. The focus was on the handwritten, spoken and visual qualities of the text to recognize what distinguishes artists’ slide writing.

A Box
This is an artefact made for a 5-minute presentation at “The Performance Dinner, number six” held by the Subjectivity & Feminisms Research Group at Chelsea College of Art on 28 February 2014. The audience consisted of practitioners working as artists, graduate students, curators, educators, writers, all seated at tables arranged in a U shape having dinner and awaiting their time to make their 5-minute contribution. This theme was to respond to Gertrude Stein’s work *Tender Buttons*, as the organizer Gill Addison explained: "in a way, which is relevant to your own practice and/or contemporary discourse on subjectivity. The nature of your response is open - it can be a reading, an act, a gesture, a mime, a costume, or an amalgamation or even none of these."?

Each slide mount was inscribed in soft pencil to produce a sense of ephemeral performance. The text was transcribed from a selection of actual slides from the WAL slide collection. The transcription included a description of features like the “red dot” that was in the corner of some of the slides. I distributed a slide mount to each diner, and asked them to each read out the name on the top of the slide to activate my reading the title of the work that the slide represented. In this way, the slides’ inscriptions were performed to became a verbal and aural projection of a set of slides.

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Keren Down
Ann-Maree Reaney
Jane Lindsey
Annette Rowdon
Annette Rowdon
Rene Horrox
Kimberley Gundle
L. McConnon
Rai Smith
Marie Spartali Stillman
Lynn Ross
Marlene Hanna
Doris Lubell
Wendy Sullivan
Kimberley Gundle
Wendy Sullivan
Lygia Clark

Felt figures,
Stealing public spaces fails,
No.4 Top,
Top 5 Meditation,
4 Star of India black marble,
6. Bamboo onglaze gold,
Swirling pink charcoal,
Examined moment,
Rumba 88,
Showing Diavola his enchanted,
Flax, Fleece and Rags,
View from this side,
Connections,
DRYPOINT DEAL,
The sage of all Faiths,
Red dot,
The Room oil,
To be touched and worn by the viewer.
Keren Down
Felt figures

stealing public spaces fails

M. C.
The Flipbook: “Stepping from a Slide Walk on a Saturday, August 4 2012 at 12:02, 12:22, 12:31, 12:41”
See: Accompanying Material\Video\Screencapture Videos\Flipbk_Stepping.mp4

The Flipbook is the print out of a 5 second video made from 5 images selected to represent 5 artists from SlideWalk 4 August 2012. The artists are Pauline Lucas, Shanie Lumsden, Su Lupasco, Rody Luton and Kaye Lynch.

Each 1 second of the film is represented by 10 pages of the flipbook, reflecting the amount of pages the mechanism of flipping pages needs to keep the single image in view. The film was printed on to business cards and clamped with a bulldog clip used for scrap paper in the WAL office until 2002 when WAL moved to Goldsmiths. The book fits in a recycled slide box used by the artist Cecile Elstein to send slides to the WAL. The top has also been labelled to identify slides as belonging to the WAL when it was located at Central Saint Martins College of Art. The inscribed masking tape is a tribute to artists in the WAL slide collection who used masking tape as labelling material for their slides. The images of the slides are approximately life-size.
The Print: “Kim Valdez 15: Embrace the base”

This is a screenprint made from a phototransfer image from a Slide Walk that renders the image into a faint monochromatic cream image laid over an experimental organic shape. The mount is rendered in negative, to emphasize the slide mount’s script.
Appendix 2 - List of performances of the WAL slide collection

The practice element of this research tests how the 'spatial sovereignty' gained by the WAL slide collection might become a digital resource with 'tactical and affective significance.'

This research practice created performances of the WAL slide collection using different media and displays. By performance I mean performative interactions designed to activate the artists’ slides.

Slide Walks: photographing the analogue slide collection

The first performative project of the WAL slide collection began with an experimental photographic session on 26 May 2010, making digital images of artists’ slides that would show the full detail of the artist’s 35mm slide: the inscription on the slides’ mount along with the detail of the slides’ image printed on the transparency. The sessions developed into a performative procedure outlined in Appendix 3. This project was titled the Slide Walks to distinguish it as a performative moving through the WAL slide collection simultaneously producing digital image files. The digital image files produced by this performative methodology was an experiment questioning the orthodoxies of slide collection digitization which is central to this research.

The Slide Walks produced digital photographs of each slide in its setting in the slide file, and occasionally focused on other details of the slides’ setting including the edge of the light table and the margins of the slides’ mounts and images. The following is a complete list of all the photographic sessions as performances of the WAL slide collection, including the first session that took place before I registered to do this PhD research. The following indicates the extent of research data and the volume is too large for me to include in the Accompanying Material unedited. I have included compressed versions of those Slide Walks that are cited in the thesis in the ACCOMPANYING_MATERIAL/CITED_SLIDE_WALKS folder in the enclosed USB drive. Numerous examples of Slide Walk images illustrate the thesis text and more details regarding the cited Slide Walks are in Appendix 4. However, it is noteworthy to include a chronology and indication of the size of digital material generated by the Slide Walk sessions here to mark the extent of this photographic

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interaction with the WAL slide collection. The original intention being to photograph the collection in its entirety. Each file represents a photograph and the digital size of each folder containing the files of a single session.

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<tr>
<td>b) 18 Feb 2012</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>457MB</td>
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<td>c) 1 Apr 2012</td>
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<td>k) 25 May 2013</td>
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<td>l) 1 Jul 2013</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>m) 26 Jan 2014</td>
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<td>n) 11 Feb 2014 (Syd)</td>
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<td>o) 20 Apr 2015</td>
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**Narrated projections**

I was invited to talk about my research practice with the WAL slide collection from an early stage in the research project. I used these opportunities to project analogue slides alongside their digital counterparts that I had made during Slide Walks. These projections enabled me to consider the performative nature of artists’ slides. My presentations explored differences between the material experiences of analogue and digital projections and how they convey the artists’ practices. This list produces a chronology and indicates the range of contexts and audiences that I engaged with over the course of this research. To view the presentations 29 April 2013 and 3 December 2016 see: USB drive: Accompanying Material/VIDEOS/Presentations Recordings.

**Projections using PowerPoint for Slide Walk images and slide carousel projectors for the original slides**

ii) 20 February 2013. “Photographic Archives, Technologies, and Methods of Recording” Workshop on The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.


iv) 29 January 2016 Invisible Knowledge series, Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), Glasgow

v) 3 December 2016 12 Hour Action Group, Cooper Gallery, Duncan Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee

Performative presentations featuring A Box

A Box is a prop devised to explore the performativity of artists’ slides’ inscriptions through public collective reading. A Box was developed as a means of sharing my research interest in reading across the WAL slide collection through the slides’ mounts rather than into the slide collection for its content. For more detail on A Box see Appendix 1.

vi) 6th March 2013. KAPTUR managing visual arts data 'end-of-project' conference at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), London.

vii) 14 May 2013, 6:30pm Panel discussion titled Collaborative Elaboration of Meaning: Photography, at the ICA, London.

viii) 11 Jul 2013 "The slide library: dodo, lame duck or phoenix" with Jenny Godfrey (Cardiff Metropolitan University) at the ARLIS UK and Ireland Conference, Bristol

ix) 9 March 2015 International Women's Day event - Monica Ross's 'history or not', Arts ProjectSpace, Loughborough University.

x) 23 September 2016 Matter and Meaning: Materiality and the Visual Arts Archive, University of Brighton

The most fully developed performative presentation was the seminar “Rescue the
saying from the said” held at the University of Brighton as part of the iota (image-object-text-analysis) seminar and reading group series organized by the DHVMC (Design History, Visual and Material Culture) research group at the university. The readings I set were: Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 1914 (see especially the 'Objects' section: A Box, The Red Stamp, A Cloth, Objects)

http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15396/15396-h/15396-h.htm

Dwight Conquergood's 'Beyond the Text: Towards and Performative Cultural Politics' (1998) (especially the second section)


I used the seminar to described the progress of questioning the WAL slide collection through ways of experiencing it as a series of encounters; firstly as a body of material to digitize, then a collection of slides to digitally photograph, then as a collection of slides to experience in a digital environment narrated (or performed) by me, then as a collection of images performed by a software program rendering them into a sub-collection of digital files customised into low-resolution images suitable for distribution online. I then distributed a database of all the artists represented in the WAL collection as one of the 8 original scores of Clare Gasson’s *The River*, printed on paper and annotated by the performers. This encounter with an actual archived object was followed with clearing the tables and doing away with the archive by introducing food and drink to the space, for everyone to be aware of how they are performing the next iteration of the slide collection. When everyone was settled with drinks and suitably messy finger-food, I introduced *A Box* for a performative reading that focuses on slide mount texts as ‘utterances’ that can be distilled and performed away from the Archive. *A Box* contains empty slide mounts inscribed in soft pencil with text from actual slides that I distributed to participants encouraging them to handle the mounts as ordinary rather than archival objects (see also Appendix 1). I liken my distribution of each slide to a reader like loading the carousel of an analogue slide projector, and as each annunciates a name I am ‘triggered’ to read my transcriptions from the artist’s slide mount. The work is represented through spoken word. My voice brings a consistency to the pronouncement of the titles which coheres with the image poems of Gertrude Stein that formed part of the seminar’s prepared readings, along with Dwight Conquerwood’s work against academic text advocating
knowledge production through performance, and the context for my research investigating the idea of releasing what the WAL slide collection is ‘saying’ from what the slides once ‘said.’

Performing the WAL slide collection in digital environments

Screen capture video
My research explores the WAL slide collection through digitization and interactions as performances of the material. I combined these two practices by video recording screen-based administration tasks working with a selection of JPEGs of WAL slides made during Slide Walk 11 May 2013. I used MEE (Microsoft Expression Encoder) to video two image collection management processes: the automated resizing of all the images made during the Slide Walk 11 May 2013 in Photoshop CS6 and the manual conversion of screenshots into MHTML files.

SldWlk_JPEG_work
I chose to record image management interactions to represent the shift from analogue to digital workspaces (from lightbox to computer screen) that affects how artists document and present their work in image collections since the redundancy of 35mm slide technology. This video records what appears on a monitor as Photoshop software batch-processed the 229 images making up Slidewalk May 11, 2013 to make them transferable to the networked space of a Wordpress blog. It was uploaded to Vimeo9 and the link embedded in a blog post "Slidewalk Introduction: May 11 2013"10. The blog features a set of 67 of the 299 low resolution jpegs produced by the recorded processing.

MHTM_ScreenCapture_28-11-2014
The second task I recorded is of my laborious conversions of screenshot views of

individual slides alongside thumbnails of the entire folder of images made during Slide Walk 11 May 2013 to MHTML. The screenshots show how each image is embedded in the collection of images created by the Slide Walk. This recording explores how the digital environment of 'files' preserves and presents the artist's slide as a collected and classifiable digital object through the manual labour of an individual working at a PC.

The process shows a digital folder of slide walk images being unpacked to display 3 views of a single image simultaneously and then saved as screenshot as a MHTML file. Unlike the automated file conversion recorded during the Photoshop batch processing, these actions never isolate the image from the matrix of the collection. The recording shows a body at work at a computer experiencing the monotony of digital labour. Losing concentration and double-clicking by mistake sends the ‘digitizer’ to another space momentarily as the PC defaults to opening the JPEG with imaging software. The automatic function interrupts the digitizer’s flow of actions focused on the task of digital migration and switches digital spaces, forcing an interaction with a deviant screen and the ‘hidden’ software that takes over the visible space as a result of this momentary slip of the mouse.

See USB drive: ACCOMPANYING_MATERIAL/VIDEOS/Screencapture Videos/ MHTM_ScreenCapture_28-11-2014.wmv

**Projecting in a digital environment: Set up networked viewing space**
https://agreenan258.wordpress.com/about/
Set up account in WordPress to create a networked space to situate the digital recordings in flat lightbox format and links to video

https://vimeo.com/user34892354
Set up Vimeo account to upload video walks of digitized processes related to image collection management.

* SldWlk1 Jpg Work 07-12-2014 [https://vimeo.com/113831600]
* Slidewalk Capture November 2014 [https://vimeo.com/113079133]
Alternative performances of discovered texts

Hybrid space: fieldnotes
In November 2014, I uploaded the first notebook of fieldnotes I made during early Slide Walks using an electronic pen that rendered writing in analogue and digital formats. I presented this notebook in Wordpress (https://agreenan258.wordpress.com/about/the-slidewalk-field-notes/). The notebook was uploaded in two formats to demonstrate the digital characteristics of the inscribed paper notebooks.

1. A sample of pages was represented by a high resolution scan saved as a JPEG that can be enlarged to see the paper’s pattern that enables the electronic pen to record writing.
2. Below the scan is the unedited text of an entire notebook that was generated from my handwriting converted through Optical Character Recognition into a text document.

Digital slips
In June 2015, I produced a sample of object writing following a writing residential hosted by Kristen Kreider as part of the AHRC-funded ARENA Skills Enhancement Programme. The ‘object’ is a slide file. The writing was done using electronic pen on paper and the writing was output using Optical Character Recognition software (Myscribe) into a Word document. The unedited text was shared with my reading/writing group (see Acknowledgements) as a piece of writing relating to this research, as a means of exploring deviant digital migration and how it can be visualized in text. For full text see Appendix 6.

“Looking for the women artists”
In September 2016, I produced a short, accelerated live action video recording my hands as I search through a batch of catalogue index cards salvaged from the dismantled card catalogue created for the Goldsmiths library teaching slide collection. I am looking for any card relating to slides featuring women artists. I am looking for vestiges of text that represent women artists in a slide collection that no longer exists. See USB drive: Accompanying_Material/VIDEOS/Looking_4_Women.mp4
Appendix 3 - How to Slide Walk

THIS IS A METHOD OF DIGITIZING SLIDES IN THEIR SLIDE FILES.

YOU NEED:
- A DIGITAL CAMERA WITH THE CAPACITY TO FOCUS ON A 2 ½ INCH BY 2 ½ INCH OBJECT
- A LIGHT BOX

GO TO THE STORAGE SPACE OF HANGING SLIDE FILES, FIND A NAME YOU WOULD LIKE TO
START WITH AND SELECT AS MANY OF THE SLIDE FILES FOLLOWING THAT NAME THAT YOU
WANT TO EXPLORE – BUT NO MORE THAN YOU CAN GRASP WITH YOUR HANDS.

BRING THE STACK OF SLIDE FILES TO THE LIGHT BOX.

SELECT A SINGLE SHEET OF SLIDES FROM THE TOP – THIS SHOULD BE THE NAME YOU
WANTED TO START WITH - AND PLACE THE SHEET ON THE LIGHT BOX.

TURN ON THE LIGHT BOX.

POSITION THE FILE SO THAT YOU CAN LEAN OVER THE SLIDE FILE AND FOCUS ON THE INNER
EDGE OF THE SLIDE MOUNT ADJACENT TO THE TRANSPARENCY TO MAXIMISE FOCUS
ACROSS BOTH.

PHOTOGRAPH THE SLIDES ONE AT A TIME AND MOVE ACROSS THE SHEET OF SLIDES UNTIL
EACH HAS BEEN PHOTOGRAPHED. DWELLING ON A PARTICULAR SLIDE OR DETAIL SHOULD
ALSO BE RECORDED.

FINISH WHEN YOU HAVE REACHED THE LAST OF YOUR SELECTED SLIDE FILES OR WHEN YOU
ARE TOO TIRED TO CARRY ON.

RETURN THE SLIDE FILES TO THEIR PLACE IN THE COLLECTION

TRANSFER THE IMAGES FROM THE CAMERA AND STORE THEM IN A FOLDER NAMED WITH
THE DATE OF YOUR WALK.
Appendix 4 – Artists in the Slide Walks

This list records the artists whose slides were photographed during the Slide Walks that form the initial phase of the research practice engaging with the Women’s Art Library slide collection. Artists’ names appear as they were inscribed (either handwritten or typed). The Women’s Work sub-collection of slides includes documentation of exhibitions held at the Brixton Art Gallery and may have been labelled by someone other than the artist. The rest of the slides were as far as I’m aware, produced by the artist herself or come directly from her.

SLIDE WALK 26 May 2010
This was the first walk experimenting with the format of the session, experimenting with different lighting conditions and determining how to select artists’ files and the pace of the actual photographing action.
Rhodes
Julia Gash
Barbara Gass
Nora Gaston
Gates
Leslie Hakim Dowek
Angela Edmonds
Women’s Work – Brixton Art Gallery
Kim Tong
Teri Bullen
Teena Gould
Françoise Dupré
Mary Anne Gordon
Ruth Charlton
Sara Elizabeth Robertson
Sally Mould
Sue Lawes
Jo Ferguson
Carolyn Corben
Gabby Müller
Sonia Martin  
Roxane Permar  
Ann Michie  
Suzanne Manners  
Katrina  
Philippa Peckham  
Christina Lorimer  
Lynne Beel  
Barbara Levy  
Angela Lucas  
Annette Welch  
Lynne Ellis  
Regina Scull  
Paula Williams  
Jann Nevard  
Trace Newton  
Sally Booth  
Liz Merrell  
Geraldine Walsh  

Brixton Women’s Collective Exhibition

SLIDE WALK 16 July 2012  
This walk focused on the distinctive slide mounts material used by these two artists found in close proximity in the collection.  
Jessica Smith  
Rai Smith

SLIDE WALK 21 July 2012  
This walk went through a box of slide files waiting to be re-filed into the main sequence. They had been withdrawn to make room for new artists because these slide files had only one slide. They will not be withdrawn permanently and space will be made to reintegrate them into the main sequence of contemporary artist slide files.  
Keren Down  
L. McConnon
Hedwig Schubert
Jayne Saunders
L. Harindon
Sharon Dipity
E. Canzian
Maria Simonds-Gooding
Doris Lubell
Jo Darbyshire
Ann-Maree Reaney
Norma Silverton
Brenda Miller
Emerita Pansowová
Frances King
Jane Lindsey
Beth Higgins
Lynn Ross
Kimberley Gundle
Rene Horrocks
Virginia Hunt
Pamela Haydon
Amanda King
Annette Rowdon

SLIDE WALK 26 July 2012
Nina Jennings
B. Heriz
Marlene Hanna
Sarah Hamshere
Adele Howitt
Gillian Spires
Wendy Sullivan

SLIDE WALK August 4 2012
This Slide Walk includes slides recovered from the Goldsmith Library teaching slide
collection which has been dismantled.
Brighid Lowe
P. Luberda
Claire Lucas
Pauline Lucas
Sarah Lucas
Stacey Luce
S. Lumsden
Su Lupasco
Rody Luton
Anne Lydiat
Stella Lymas
Anne Lynch
Kaye Lynch

SLIDE WALK 11 May 2012
This Slide Walk includes slides from commercial galleries.
Isik Tüzüner
Salla Tykkä
Mierle Laderman Ukeles
J. Umerle
Belinda Underhill
Kate Underwood
C. Ursitti
Kim Valdez
Be’ Van Der Heide
Emma Vanderwerwe

SLIDE WALK 25 May 2013
Jane McKeating
Angela McCabe
Marcia Bennett
Mary Mackey
C. Baugh
SLIDE WALK 26 January 2014

Chris Keleher
JK.
Carole Kell
Fiona Kelly
Josephine Kelly
Mary Kelly
Roshini Kempadoo
Mary Kenny
Jane Kent
Appendix 5 - Women’s Art Library Contemporary Artists slide file holdings
(source: Goldsmiths University of London Library CALM archives catalogue
http://www.calmview.eu/Goldsmiths/CalmView/default.aspx)

As of 17 May 2017, there are 2,013 “Contemporary Artists” slide files listed in the Goldsmiths CALM archive catalogue. The number of slides held in each artist’s file ranges from 1 to approximately 280.

From 2010 new slides were added to the collection that had been retrieved from the Goldsmiths teaching slide collection before its disposal. Many of these slides supplemented existing artists’ files. A number introduced new artists into the WAL slide collection. The slides’ mounts enable users to easily distinguish between a teaching slide and an original WAL artist slide as all teaching slides were catalogued according to Library standard procedure to facilitate a lending scheme. (see figure below) The slide mounts will remain unchanged in their new location in the WAL slide collection.
Appendix 6 - Digital Slips: Writing the Slide File Object

Piece produced as part of writing residential with Professor Kristen Kreider
(see Appendix 2: List of performances of the WAL slide collection) June 2015

was She image suspended held, clamped in a brittle plastic frame, png set in a safe dark, image of coloured acetate of "20 gigabytes detail. It can be lifted from the box to fracture the white light into a html resurrection of a painting propped up tin a garden, sunlit, illuminating the oil colours of this painting turned slide to be like stained glass, get in a safe dark this stiffened dye is suspended clamped by a plastic frame patched loosely by a name dimensions, a year. Fellow tape and a scrawl in blue ink patch this to another time to palace where they joined together, a mass of canvas, brushes, oils m-o in movement across palette to canvas via the name's eye into a garden, onto the acetate holding surface charged with over 20 gigabytes of information suspended clamped by a plastic frame whose home patch loosens with every touch, the legible surface aiding off gradually as the glue gives, up.

In a dark Thom the safe darkness of pre serration a transparency is safely held in suspense, I 34 mm = 22 gigabytes of equivalent out a colour dyed knapping M a terrain of aif on canvas and frame and Sghnrbbery. The surface in the dark shared with toxic adhesive releasing itself from the paper label To gradually its' hard to know if the 'coloured dye suspended across or by the transparency will ever be able to be set in front of a bright hot beam again, assuming that Someone in the 1980s already did before it came to be collected into a safe feminist space that had became a safe dark, writing the object, that is, the slide. or a slide from the surplus archive, the weeded out wnuseabk slides not collected but weeded out to form a separate 4 boxes of slides of artists with no records or just a sigh slide or slides that fail. to do the work of represent's an artwork well, and / or I -ise a, provide a projector an enlargement of a reproduction, to reproduce an artwork well.
So- to write the slide =
An assemblage of polymers, materials that have been firmed from liquid states, the small frame that snaps shut over the edges of the transparency; two sides of which has regularly spaced holes, Cut pom a reel of film this insoluble magic pad, emerged from a bank of solution with, inscribed with an image of detail so fine it would take 20 gigabytes of density in a digital-as a digital thing.
Here it is amongst thousands of others, It dtakscs no time to see, no download lapse, just take a moment to find light, I pick it up and move it through the air, an informal test to find the strongest light source to portion the transparency in front of, without a igectos it's backlit, a filter of colour, a window framing another place, world, artist's moment of toothy How precious are these moments when an artist sees her work through a camera? It designates a decision of completion i This is it, and the slide mounts = this is what it's called, how big, when I made it. The transparency emerges from the wet solution to dry and fix this artwork between the gtafi Hi, 'plastic holders ready to be re-viewed with any available light. writhing the slide as object. 'The transparency is only a light passes through the image for a flash of time, Shred in darkness, set in vertically,-
oriented pockets where gravity secures their position, sometimes the transparency interacts with the polythene of its pocket and s causes it to stretch, buckle out, so that a but transparency is echoed by a bulge in the pocket whenever a slide sits, 24 in one slide file, It evokes the urge to srerae, to break this unhealthy contact of transparency and sh. storage file., I worry about the transparency and what changes this might make to its image, but as I write, I realise it is holder that is buckling.

Day 3 writing the slide object. Today the collection. To find a feminist poetics as KK might define it or think of it-the something beyond form and content. what yen want others to see, a set; organised, navigable but ideally 'an experience of insight waiting to happen. Thin enough to slip into 24 pockets and hanging sheet pockets transparent so they can be viewed without handling, a collected evidence proof that the name written on each label, the artist writing herself, her name as she names herself and her work, averts her authorship up to 24 times per sheet, the best, the matter of a practice of making and of making mere, more and more.. Beyond the edges, the holdings, the collection policy (the confines) of this body is more and more. The holdings are should be enough and never enough. They prove, they hint at, they disappoint with lack and fall short you experience excess, anticipation you become experienced at reading between the lines. It is not all there. There's much more than you thought. This is not what I expected. This is beyond expectation, what you brought was your own and what you are meant to be is impressed. Here is more and more, a reiteration of richness. that improves our understanding, what? The extent of art practice, its moment, the moment of commitment,

I did this. Sometimes it is a one off but that can not be assumed, The beauty of this collection is finiteness of that material slide which became obsolete. Electronic media now adlekt evidence, but the making is for transmission not handling. Here is your chance to handle with your eyes the label, the warming of the work, the name q the artist, in blue ballpoint again and again and again to be sure it is well-attached.

"camera handicraft" 1- The Fragility of the artist-the self portrait, ephemeral-r ancestral Blow up the slide into materials to lead back to studio - label rape pin peril, the mounts the transparency the artwork? the artist, the name clouds musical sand all on one page
Appendix 7 – Documentation relating to The River, Clare Gasson 2011

Notes for The River (Clare Gasson 2011) This is a list of compositional instructions devised by Clare Gasson and Huw Hallam, musicologist.\footnote{The River would not have been possible without help from Huw Hallam. The internal structure of the piece has grown out of numerous conversations with Huw over a period of months. Huw Hallam is a musicologist and writer. He is currently in the final phase of a Ph.D. that seeks to re-conceptualise the political dimensions of late twentieth century European musical composition. (Clare Gasson, 2011)}

Notes for The River 5 November 2011
Goldsmiths College, Prokofiev Room

The River is more or less 3 beats to bar – looking at a ballad. This list of names, just the names, has been described as a manifesto so that is the feel and idea behind the piece but with a minimal interior strictures. All names should be uttered – even if there is overlapping it is important that each name is spoken.

A - Begin by mouthing only, then just audible – gradually increase to conversational level throughout – gently asynchronous.

As this section continues each vocalist weaves in and out of different volumes – from mouthing, whispering, conversational, louder, almost but not quite shouting.

B - Synchronous – each person reads the same name with same phrasing and pauses.
Confident, conversational volume.

End this section with a long pause.

C - Quiet - mumbling at first, increase speed gently – as fast as possible – increase volume – with energy.
Ragged ending – when your names have finished stop to let others catch up.

D - Refrain – 1 – Staccato and random – volume and rhythm – with the energy of no compromise – machine gun fire

E - Vocalists working in 3 pairs – each reading in rhythmic synchrony, approx 3 beats to bar. When one member of the pair strikes a long name (ie a very long name or double barrelled name) the rhythm is tripped or shifted and both vocalists follow that route. This can also happen with a very short name something that feels odd rhythmically so it flips the flow and so the vocalists go with the strange rhythm.

Options for the pairs which work as one voice:

I Interlock vs. I First name, second name, silence
II Silence, first name, second name

here the second voice makes the change the first remains as it was.

2. Volume ebbs and flows (including mouthing the names audible and inaudible).

3. Speed ebbs and flows with or against the volume.

4. Pairs can interact (or avoid this) – producing phasing effects.

In this middle section at any time individuals should articulate chosen names in a way that punctuates the texture.

F - as for B – speaking as individuals again – so synchronous – each person reads the same name with same phrasing and pauses. Confident, conversational volume.

G - I refrain – Staccato and random – volume and rhythm – with the energy of no compromise – machine gun fire! Can be punctuated with You! And We! and Us!

H - Mysterious section. Vocalists speaking as individuals – texture is asynchronous – overall hunted.
Blocks of as fast as possible – silence – audible slow and over-articulated mouthing. Ends in a block of extended silence – avoid provoking applause.

I - Asynchronous, confident, projected, becoming stronger, declaratory and increasing in speed to the end – vocalists will finish at different times – the ones finishing last should become more declaratory more confident as they finish.

\[\text{\footnotesize Notes for The River 5 November 2011 Goldsmiths College, Prokofiev Room}\
\text{\footnotesize The River is more or less 3 beats to bar – looking at a ballad. This list of names, just the names, has been described as a manifesto so that is the feel and idea behind the piece but with a minimal interior strictures. All names should be uttered – even if there is overlapping it is important that each name is spoken.}\
\text{\footnotesize A - Begin by mouthing only, then just audible – gradually increase to conversational level throughout – gently asynchronous.}\
\text{\footnotesize As this section continues each vocalist weaves in and out of different volumes – from mouthing, whispering, conversational, louder, almost but not quite shouting.}\
\text{\footnotesize B - Synchronous – each person reads the same name with same phrasing and pauses.}\
\text{\footnotesize Confident, conversational volume.}\
\text{\footnotesize End this section with a long pause.}\
\text{\footnotesize C - Quiet - mumbling at first, increase speed gently – as fast as possible – increase volume – with energy.}\
\text{\footnotesize Ragged ending – when your names have finished stop to let others catch up.}\
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\text{\footnotesize here the second voice makes the change the first remains as it was.}\
\text{\footnotesize 2. Volume ebbs and flows (including mouthing the names audible and inaudible).}\
\text{\footnotesize 3. Speed ebbs and flows with or against the volume.}\
\text{\footnotesize 4. Pairs can interact (or avoid this) – producing phasing effects.}\
\text{\footnotesize In this middle section at any time individuals should articulate chosen names in a way that punctuates the texture.}\
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\text{\footnotesize H - Mysterious section. Vocalists speaking as individuals – texture is asynchronous – overall hunted.}\
\text{\footnotesize Blocks of as fast as possible – silence – audible slow and over-articulated mouthing. Ends in a block of extended silence – avoid provoking applause.}\
\text{\footnotesize I - Asynchronous, confident, projected, becoming stronger, declaratory and increasing in speed to the end – vocalists will finish at different times – the ones finishing last should become more declaratory more confident as they finish.}\
\]
Sample of first page of a vocalist’s annotated score for *The River*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player 1</th>
<th>Player 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martine</td>
<td>Aaron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Chris</td>
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