Introduction

Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.
Marcellus in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*[1]

There are things and occurrences that make us call upon the help of others. Situations that we feel we cannot handle ourselves or at least engage with single-handedly. Upon seeing the ghost of Hamlet's father, the officer Marcellus in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* summons Horatio, scholar and friend of Hamlet, to witness the appearance of this *thing,* and as it reappears Marcellus charges Horatio with speaking to the ghost. Marcellus has, in other words, seen this overwhelming and confounding thing before (twice, in fact), but he discerns that Horatio is better suited to engage with the ghost. This is the opening ghost scene of Act I of *Hamlet*, one that philosopher Jacques Derrida uses —along with the additional re-appearances of the ghost throughout the play—to develop his *hauntology* in his book *Specters of Marx*.[2] But while Derrida's politics of memory certainly plays a part in this thesis, my interest here is not merely the untimely presence of things past, but also the gesture, like that carried out by Marcellus, of delegating a task to someone else. He has happened upon something that is indeed too overwhelming and perplexing to deal with alone, and so he summons Horatio and charges him with engaging with the ghost.

This procedure of delegating a task to someone else is key to the practical operations that underpin this thesis—to be specific, the act of commissioning—and the reason for this act is exactly such an overwhelming thing of the past, in this case the Danish Radio Archive.[3]

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[1] William Shakespeare, "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark," in *The Works of William Shakespeare* (The Shakespeare Head Press, Odham Press Ltd and Basil Blackwell, 1947), 671.

[2] Hauntology, for Derrida, supplants and overturns its near-homonym, ontology. Instead of being and presence, hauntology evokes the figure of the ghost, which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. Other than being an ethical injunction and a politics of memory, the ghost also reminds us that our living present is not as self-sufficient as we might think, as Frederic Jameson has noted. Frederic Jameson, "Marx's Purloined Letter," in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Michael Sprinker, Radical Thinkers 33 (London ; New York: Verso, 2008), 39, and Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), 10.

[3] The Danish Radio Archive, or the DR Archive as I will refer to it in this thesis, is the radio archive of the National Broadcast Corporation in Denmark (or simply Denmark's Radio (DR) as I will refer to it henceforth.) For further information, see Jan Dohrmann, "About DR," DR.dk, accessed January 17, 2015, http://www.dr.dk/om_dr/about+dr.

We are, in other words, still in Denmark—albeit 40 km south of Elsinore, in Copenhagen, where the Danish Broadcasting Corporation has resided since 1925. The scene, however, is considerably less murderous than that of Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* Furthermore, there are, in fact, two instances of commissioning at work in this project—the first one I am subject to myself, the other one is my curatorial doing—but both of them concern the DR Archive. I will begin with the first instance of commissioning, which determines the basic set-up of this PhD project, and in a few pages I will get to the second round of commissioning, which determines my approach to the DR Archive.

The DR Archive is the subject matter of the research project LARM[4] of which I am part, and practice is stipulated as a mode of address in the call for research proposals that, following an application, I was selected to produce a response to. To this end, my PhD adheres to the notion of a commission—I am charged with producing a particular kind of work, that is, to engage with the DR Archive by way of my practice as a curator and in turn produce a piece of research, a thesis. Now, the (re-)appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father, which prompts Marcellus to urge Horatio to speak to it, does not happen on a whim. A dire urgency has called forth the ghost, and we may similarly ask about the urgency of the DR Archive. Because if the commission, as I will argue in more detail later on, does indeed respond to a need, to an incompleteness, to a certain potentiality that lends itself to new or renewed work, one might ask, why the archive now, and why practice? What is the immediate urgency, the gravity, the potential of these things that call for research and scrutiny in the first place?

A Different Archival Approach

Part of the answer to that question is that the DR Archive is in a process of digitalisation, one that is ongoing and, in all likelihood, will continue for years to come. While digitalisation is primarily a means to preserve the radiophonic documents, it also enables unprecedented access to the Danish radiophonic cultural heritage. Rather than being confined to the physical archive and the interface of analogue playback technologies, digitalisation of the audio files renders them potentially accessible from anywhere and at any time. LARM is exploiting this potential by producing an online platform, LARM.fm, which provides online streaming of the

[4] LARM is an interdisciplinary research project involving a number Danish research and cultural institutions. For further information, see LARM, "About LARM," LARM Audio Research Archive, accessed January 2, 2015, http://larm.blogs.ku.dk/about-larm/.

digitalised files, available in the first instance to researchers and students.[5] In addition to this technological component, LARM also includes a number of humanistic research projects that—apart from producing exemplary case studies into the radiophonic cultural heritage—also contribute by formulating requirements for the infrastructure, or to use LARM's turn of phrase, LARM.fm is conditioned by "user driven innovation."[6] Digitalisation, in other words, is the exigency that has prompted the LARM research project and its commissioning of numerous PhDs and Post Docs, including my own.

It is safe to say that the archive was not non-urgent or indeed unproblematic before the emergence of digital media, but digitalisation would seem to establish a new archival potentiality, a new need. It demands scrutiny and examination as to the meaning and gravity of the archive; does the digital add something radically different to our understanding of the archive? If we turn to cultural critic Andreas Huyssen the answer is certainly affirmative; the past has, he argues, "become part of the present in ways simply unimaginable in earlier centuries"[7] due to modern reproduction media and the internet. In a certain sense the LARM project itself also constitutes a resounding 'yes' to this question, because the project hinges on an unparalleled (albeit still restricted and at times problematic) access to the DR Archive, both analogue and digital. What is different, even before the infrastructure is put in place and the research conducted, is that the LARM project can take place at all.

It could, on the other hand, be argued that there is nothing new in undertaking archival research; in fact, the archive is, along with the library, one of the most ordinary places to conduct research within the humanities. Of course, digitalisation has made the archive infinitely more accessible and convenient; rather than spending hours in the physical archive trying to locate the sought-after file, the digital infrastructure delivers the desired document instantaneously. But are we in reality simply doing what we always have done? Are the questions we are asking and the answers we are seeking in the digital archive really different, or do we just get to where we want to go more quickly? The other charge of the commission—to address the archive through practice—seems to indicate that LARM is also looking for approaches to the archive that differ from prevalent academic modes of inquiry. Not that scholarly practice has become redundant—there is a range of crucial questions, methods, and theories at work in academia—but perhaps the proliferation of scholarly

[5] LARM depends on a copyright agreement with DR and the State and University Library (Statsbiblioteket) that allow students and researchers to access digitalised audio files via LARM.fm.
[6] LARM, "About LARM," http://larm.blogs.ku.dk/about-larm/.
[7] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1.

research has washed out its contours and rendered it conventional and hence indiscernible. Or, as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has phrased it, research "is so much part of the ground on which we stand and the air we breathe that it resists conscious scrutiny. (...) *Research* is virtually synonymous with our sense of what it means to be scholars and members of the academy, and thus it has the invisibility of the obvious."[8]

As a privileged stomping ground for knowledge production, the archive is, perhaps, a particularly difficult place to relinquish this invisibility, but that does not mean that we should not try. The point here, of course, is not to abandon established research practices just for the sake of it. But if the archive indeed is such a fertile ground for a certain kind of knowledge production, perhaps it has even more in store for us if we stray off the familiar paths, which steadily take us where we want to go, and instead scour for alternative routes and different archival practices,[9] not only to meet the archive differently and discernibly, but also to differentiate, make visible and perhaps even influence the workings of scholarly practice. As cultural critic and theorist Mieke Bal has paraphrased Appadurai's examination of research, the latter advances "the need to develop a dialogic sensibility that makes it possible to learn mutually from contact with different modes of doing research."[10]

Practice has, in recent decades, been seeping into academia's traditionally theory-based knowledge production, testifying to a tentative rehashing of academia's epistemological tradition. There is of course nothing new in deriving knowledge from practice. Practical knowledge informs an infinite number of activities and procedures in society, but historically the embodied, practical, situation-specific knowledge of the craftsman has been segregated

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[8] Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," in *Globalization*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 10.

[9] While the archive, from an academic perspective, is most often considered a source of research where researchers look for specific traces of the past in order to confirm or contest a prevailing perception of a given subject—or perhaps to propose an entirely new one—there are of course many other ways to engage with the archive, both within and beyond academia. Approaching the DR Archive through the act of commissioning, which is what I do here, differs from such traditional approaches by not only introducing artistic and curatorial practices into the mix, but also by emphasising the significance of how the archive is approached, engaged with and put to work through these practices. Another national broadcast corporation, the BBC, announced last year that it had chosen six Scottish moving image artists, who will be given access to the BBC archives in order to produce artworks. While this initiative bears some resemblance to what I am doing here, it is, to my knowledge, not framed as a curatorial research project. See BBC, "BBC Arts Selects Six Scottish Artists to Delve into BBC Archives - Media Centre," BBC, February 14, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/artists-and-archive.

[10] Mieke Bal, "Research Practice: New Words on Cold Cases," in *What Is Research in the Visual Arts?: Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts (Williamstown, Mass. : New Haven: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute ; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2008), 209.

from the theoretical, context-independent knowledge of the scientist.[11] However, the advancement of practice-as-research begins to negotiate the divide between embodied and conceptual knowledge, suggesting that knowledge originating in or through practice may be put to work beyond its particular context. The intention here, I would argue, is not necessarily to seek generalisable applications for the knowledge generated through practice—to generate theory from practice, so to speak—but to work the intensities and pursue the potentialities of these encounters, as Appadurai has suggested. This is what this thesis aspires to do.

So, while the commission to which I respond is initially prompted by the digitalisation of the DR Archive, the other stipulation of the commission—to approach the archive by way of my practice as a curator—indicates an additional potentiality: that the archive may have more in store for us if we approach it through another mode of address; that we might be able to actualise the archive's potential for knowledge production differently. We have, to be sure, been asking questions and searching for answers in the archive before, and we may continue to do so in the digital archive, conditioned of course by the new digital structure of the archive.[12] But addressing the archive through practice might enable us to ask these questions differently or, perhaps even, to ask entirely different questions. Of course, we cannot designate these questions beforehand. They can only emerge through practice; through the operations that I perform in relation to the archive.

Caring for an Archive

Now, it seems pertinent to ask how a curatorial practice can produce such a different mode of inquiry. Most curators today have a background in academia, for example art history, cultural studies or curatorial MA programmes—the latter in particular has become exceedingly common for anyone wishing to pursue curating as a profession. The last decades' remarkable increase in these programmes testifies to a profession that has left behind the original role of the behind-the-scenes curator-as-carer[13] and that has increasingly, since the 1990s,[14] gained

[11] See Mikkel Bogh and Frederik Tygstrup, "Working the Interface: New Encounters between Art and Academia," in *Investigação Em Arte E Design: Fendas No Método E Na Criação = Research in Art and Design: Cracks in Method and Creation*, ed. José Quaresma, Fernando Paulo Rosa Dias, and Juan Carlos Ramos Guadix (Lisboa: Edição CIEBA, 2010), 103.

[12] As we know from Derrida, "archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives." Which is to say that our questioning and searching in the digital archive necessarily differ from our comparable efforts in the analogue archive. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago [Ill.]: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 18.

[13] Paul O'Neill, *The Culture Of Curating And The Curating Of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: The MIT Press, 2012), 9.

immense prominence, today occupying a position of agency, authority, and authorship within contemporary programming and exhibition making. The curator has become "an independently motivated practitioner with a more centralized position within the contemporary art world and its parallel commentaries,"[15] according to curator and writer Paul O'Neill; in fact, compared to the traditional museum curator it is only the work of displaying art to the public[16] that remains in the practice of the most distinct specimen of the new curator of recent decades, the independent curator.[17] Specifically, the curator can be described as someone who produces connections[18]—curating is, according to art historian Beatrice von Bismarck, a constellational activity that combines "things that haven't been connected before—artworks, artefacts, information, people, sites, contexts, resources, etc."[19]

This definition, however, only address *what* the curator does, and not *how* she does it, so we might ask what sort of drive or sentiment precipitates this curatorial mode of operation? To come up with an answer to this question, I would like to return to the notion of care, which the term 'curator' both historical and etymological adheres to,[20] but one that has declined on account of the transformation of the role of the curator. But maybe we shouldn't discard the original attributes of the curator too hastily.[21] To care for something or someone

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[14] Beatrice von Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality – On the Role of Freelance Curators in the Field of Contemporary Art," *Oncurating.org*, no. 9 (2011): 19.
[15] O'Neill, *The Culture Of Curating And The Curating Of Culture(s)*, 2.
[16] Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak list four crucial tasks that can be said to define the traditional (museum) curator: safeguarding the heritage, enriching collections (through acquisitions of contemporary works), research and display. Ironically, the public presentation of art "traditionally occupied the lowest level in the hierarchy of functions." The four tasks listed by Heinich and Pollak, however, remain crucial to many museum curators today. Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur," in Thinking about Exhibitions, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996), 235.
[17] Cf. the prominence of the independent curator see for example Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality," 19–23, and Jens Hoffmann, "A Certain Tendency of Curating," in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007), 137–142.
[18] Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality," 19.
[19] Irit Rogoff and Beatrice von Bismarck, "Curating/Curatorial," in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. Jörn Schafaff, Thomas Weski, and Beatrice von Bismarck (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 24. Curator and critic Maria Lind also emphasises connections as key to curating: "Today I imagine curating as a way of thinking in terms of interconnections: linking objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses in physical space like an active catalyst, generating twists, turns, and tensions." Maria Lind, "The Curatorial," in *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, ed. Brian Kuan Wood (Berlin; New York: Sternberg Press, 2010), 63. While there certainly are other ways to describe curating, I find Bismarck's and Lind's thinking about connections to be both productive and concise.
[20] A curator is, according to *OED*, someone "who has the care or charge of a thing or person." *OED Online,* s.v. "curator, n." accessed June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com. Furthermore, the Latin *cura* means care, solicitude, carefulness, thought, concern. *A Latin Dictionary,* s.v. "cura, n." accessed June 2014. (Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1879), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu.
[21] In an interview, curator Charles Esche suggests that in principle we ought to find a different name for curator, because both within and beyond art (in law, for example) a curator is someone who takes care of someone or something, or even has the responsibility of someone else. That is, an art curator cares for a collection, and a curator (in a legal sense) is someone, who takes care of a minor (at least in Scotland). These denotations are,

need not entail a tedious custodial type of caring; in fact, to care may just be the driving force behind our efforts as curators or academics. Could it not, as art critic Jan Verwoert has proposed,[22] be the reason why we insist on doing something in particular and scrupulous ways or why we initiate or become involved in poorly funded projects—because we care? We may even rejuvenate the activity of caring by evoking its now obsolete etymological association with curiosity following the lead of philosopher Michel Foucault, who has recast the notion of curiosity through its connection to concern and care:

> Curiosity is a vice that has been stigmatised in turn by Christianity, by philosophy, and even by a certain conception of science. Curiosity, futility. The word, however, pleases me. To me it suggests something altogether different: it evokes "concern"; it evokes the care one takes for what exists and could exist; a readiness to find strange and singular what surrounds us; a certain relentlessness to break up the familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things, a fervour to grasp what is happening and what passes; a casualness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential.[23]

It is of course no small task to aspire to Foucault's suggestions on this matter, but he has brought up the association between caring and curiosity, whether obsolete or not, and elaborated upon its modes, sentiments and potentialities. And they are very far from the maintenance of status quo that the curator-as-carer exercised; in fact, they are quite the opposite. Foucault enables us to reconceptualise the curator-as-carer as someone who cares and cares to operate differently; as someone who may indeed address the archive in a different manner.

Another Round of Commissioning

At the core of this project is yet another commission: I approach the DR Archive by commissioning Swedish artist Kajsa Dahlberg and Danish-Swedish-Dutch artist Olof Olsson to engage with this archive and produce artworks in relation to it. This task—just like the one that has been assigned to me by the LARM project—is a doable one. It will, needless to say, be challenging and require great effort, but it is something that we *can* work out and finalise in the form of an exhibition, for example, or a thesis. By commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson, I am, however, also delegating the task of addressing the urgency of the DR Archive—of responding to a need for a certain kind work to be done—and this task is a

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according to Esche, entirely different from the contemporary meaning of a curator as an exhibition maker, an *Ausstellungsmacher*. Charles Esche, "Beti Zerovc Interviews Charles Esche," in *Modest Proposals*, ed. Serkan Ozkaya (Istanbul: Baglam Publishing, 2005), 57.

[22] Jan Verwoert, “Personal Support: How to Care?,” in *Support Structures*, ed. Céline Condorelli (Berlin; New York: Sternberg Press, 2009), 165.

[23] Michel Foucault, “The Masked Philosopher,” in *Foucault Live: (Interviews, 1961-1984)*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston (New York, N.Y.: Semiotext(e), 1996), 305.

whole lot more difficult to be done with. It is, as I will argue in this thesis, something that we *cannot* work out. These two modes of operation pervade the inquiries of this project at large.

If we briefly, in light of this second round of commissioning, return to the initial layout of this project—the DR Archive and my curatorial practice—an additional component has been added to the mix. The archive is no longer merely my problem but also the artists'. Commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson does, however, not get me off the hook: I remain implicated.[24] The process that my commissioning brings into being is not one that I can withdraw from, in fact, the commissions forge relations not only between the artists and myself, but also—by way of the artists—between the archive and myself. That is to say, what I do as a curator and how I do it has a critical influence on the entire process, not least how the trouble with the archive plays out. On the other hand, commissioning the artists also entail that they come to condition my relation to the DR Archive. They step in-between the DR Archive and me, and in doing so they provide me with new entry points to the archive; both their processes as well as their ensuing artworks generate new archival perspectives. Their approaches, manoeuvres and choices designate certain aspects, structures, and temporalities; they seek out certain matters that concern them and go about this work in particular ways.

I was, of course, not entirely in the dark about the partialities and inclinations of the artists' practices, and hence what paths they might pursue in relation to the archive and what sort of work they might produce. My choice to work with Dahlberg and Olsson was based on thorough research into their previous work as well as conversations with them. Dahlberg (born 1973 in Gothenburg, Sweden) has, in her previous works, negotiated issues of representation, marginalisation, and agency—on several occasions devising archival systems to organise significant amounts of material, specifically in the works *A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries* (2006) and *No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly* (2010).[25] She works with video, text and sound. Olsson (born 1965 in Helsingborg, Sweden) primarily works with spoken performances, taking his cue from storytelling, comedy, and lectures. Often operating through analogies, his topical range is considerable—popular culture, politics, history, language, music, and art to name but a few—and he almost always includes autobiographical anecdotes in his performances. One might say that Dahlberg and Olsson's practices motivated the commissions; that they were already concerned with

[24] This circumstance distinguishes my commissioning of Dahlberg and Olsson from Marcellus' charging of Horatio to speak to the ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which is quoted at the beginning of this thesis.
[25] Both works will be analysed as part of Chapter 2.

archival matters in their work—Dahlberg by using archival structures to articulate and empower marginalised positions[26] and Olsson by way of his idiosyncratic take on storytelling[27] as well as his passion for radio.[28] That said, I had never worked with neither Dahlberg nor Olsson before, so any pre-conceptions I had were, needless to say, conjectural.

How We Work Today

Turning to artists in order to come to terms with an archive is not an altogether unexpected move. The archive has been a dominant trend in contemporary art for at least a decade,[29] and one that has been explored and described in numerous exhibitions and publications over the years—much too comprehensively to rehearse here in full. A key moment is of course Hal Foster's 2004 essay in which he famously observes an "archival impulse" among some contemporary artists who "seek to make information, often lost or displaced, physically present,"[30] motivated by a will "to connect what cannot be connected" with the intention of establishing alternative knowledge.[31] Foster's observation was to some extent echoed a couple of years later by another art historian, Mark Godfrey, who, in his essay "The Artist as Historian" identified an "increasing number of artists whose practice starts with research in archives, and others who deploy what has been termed an archival form of research."[32] In recent years, curators such as Okwui Enwezor,[33] Massimiliano Gioni[34] and Dieter

[26] This is particularly the case with the work *A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries*—a compilation of marginal notes and underlinings made by readers of Virginia Wolff's essay *A Room of One's Own.*
[27] Dieter Roelstraete, who I elaborate on shortly, lists storytelling as an indication of an archival tendency, "oral culture being the oldest form of memory retrieval." Dieter Roelstraete, "Field Notes," in *The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art in association with The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 23.
[28] During our first conversation in April 2012, I learned that Olsson comes from a family of passionate radio listeners.
[29] So Dieter Roelstraete argues. (Roelstraete, "Field Notes", 17.) One can, however, trace this tendency further back. For example, art historians Hal Foster and Sven Spieker argue, in different ways, that the propensity towards the archive can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. See Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 1, no. 110 (2004): 3, and Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 15.
[30] Foster, "An Archival Impulse," 4.
[31] Ibid., 21.
[32] Mark Godfrey, "The Artist as Historian," *October*, no. 120 (2007): 142-143.
[33] Enwezor curated the exhibition *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* at the International Center of Photography in New York in 2008, which focused on the mediums of photography and film. In the accompanying essay, Enwezor argues that "the camera is literally an archiving machine, every photograph, every film is *apriori* an archival object." Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York, N.Y.; Göttingen: International Center of Photography ; Steidl Publishers, 2008), 12.
[34] Gioni curated, among other things, the 55th instalment of the Venice Biennale entitled *The Encyclopedic Palace* in 2013 that takes its title from a an imaginary museum meant to house all worldly knowledge, dreamt up and patented by artist Marino Auriti in 1955. Although never realised, the desire to capture an image of the world in all its variety and richness is one that Auriti shares with many artists, writers etc.. Gioni states: "Today,

Roelstraete[35] have also been instrumental in fuelling the discussion about the archive within contemporary art.[36]

But what really makes this archival tendency too comprehensive to rehearse here is not merely its extensiveness as a tendency but also its prevalence as a mode of operation. As Roelstraete points out in the essay "Field Notes," art is now increasingly "being produced on laptops, in libraries, and of course above all in *archives*—sites for preservation and dissemination of knowledge;" places that today, by way of digital media, indeed make the past available to us in unprecedented ways, as Huyssen would have it. It is becoming, I would argue, ever more difficult to outline the limits of archival art, because digital media and the internet have proliferated and normalised the practices of searching for, selecting and compiling information. Can we today speak of art practices that do not employ some kind of archival practice, of artists who in their work do not reference some kind of archive, be it historical-at-large or art historical?[37] In her introduction to the anthology *Lost in the Archives,* editor and professor of philosophy Rebecca Comay asks: "What isn't an archive these days?"[38] We might also ask: Who isn't an archivist these days?

Now, if the purpose here was to tap into the proclivity towards the archive in contemporary art, it would appear to be almost redundant to commission artists to engage with the DR Archive, since Dahlberg and Olsson's work already—and almost inevitably—is caught up in archival practices. But the matter of concern here is not merely a certain archival tendency among contemporary artists but rather to come to terms with the DR Archive, with a chunk of cultural heritage that demands renewed scrutiny, and for this purpose artists seem to be proficient agents. What is pivotal here is not only that Dahlberg and Olsson are part of a long line of artists working with archives, but, even more importantly, that this tendency

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as we grapple with a constant flood of information, such attempts seem even more necessary and even more desperate." Massimiliano Gioni, "The Encyclopedic Palace," *La Biennale Di Venezia*, 2013, http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/archive/55th-exhibition/55iae/.

[35] In 2009, Roelstraete—turning to the metaphor of digging by way of Walter Benjamin—begins to develop his understanding of the artist as a historiographer in the essay "The Way of the Shovel: On the Archeological Imaginary in Art," published in *E-Flux Journal*, no. 4 (March 2009). This notion is further unfolded in the 2013-exhibition *The Way of the Shovel: Art as Archeology* at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the accompanying catalogue text, "Field Notes." Roelstraete prefers the notion of *historiographer* rather than Godfrey's *historian* owing to the centrality of writing or narrating in the art practices he addresses. Roelstraete, "Field Notes," 20, n. 9.

[36] These curators are just a couple of more recent examples, but as I merely wish to address this tendency in passing, I choose to mention only a couple of seminal texts and exhibitions that testify to an archival propensity in contemporary art.

[37] Roelstraete makes a distinction between the art-historical reference of the work of predecessors and the preoccupation with history in general, stating that the former is as old as art itself whereas the latter has reached a critical level today. Roelstraete, "Field Notes," 19.

[38] Rebecca Comay, "Introduction," in *Lost in the Archives*, ed. Rebecca Comay, (Toronto, ON: Alphabet City Media, 2002), 12.

enables me to rely on them when it comes to engaging with the DR Archive. I want to stress that I am not trying to diminish the significance of archival art—on the contrary, it is precisely the archival tendency in contemporary art that allows me to propose this research design. The impulse to work with the archive is, of course, not the artists' own but is occasioned by my commission: Neither a compulsion to seek out lost or displaced radiophonic documents nor an urge to "slow down the spiral of forgetfulness"[39]—as Roelstraete describes art's role—was the catalyst for their engagement with the DR Archive in the first place; I was. With this course of action, I am not only relying on an archival tendency in contemporary art but also on an archival mode of operation that has pervaded how we work today, and indeed how artists work.

Two Lines of Inquiry

What emerge from these initial manoeuvres, then, are two main lines of inquiry that are both interrelated and entangled. One is concerned with how Dahlberg and Olsson engage with the DR Archive, how they set out to realise the commissions, and how their ensuing artworks go about addressing the archive. My inquiry focuses on how their initial manoeuvres and ensuing artworks offer insights into the workings of the archive, and how the archive as an epistemic structure can sound out possible meanings of the artists' work. In other words, at issue here is a certain negotiation between the artworks and the DR Archive as to how meaning may or may not settle within this exchange. The artworks in question are Olsson's performance *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio*, which he performed nine times during his tour of Danish (and one Swedish) art and cultural institutions in January 2013, and Dahlberg's video work "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour", which was shown as part of her solo exhibition, *This Time It's Political,* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde, Denmark, opening February 1, 2013.

The other main line of inquiry is concerned with my curatorial practice, in particular the act of commissioning that not only establishes the practical configuration of this project but also constitutes my mode of inquiry into the DR Archive. Hence, this second line of inquiry prompts a pondering of the workings of the commission in order to explicate its methodological implications. The task at hand is, in other words, to flesh out the configuration of DR Archive, curator, artists, and the ensuing artworks that the commission establishes, and to develop the role of the curator. These efforts pivot on what in recent years

[39] Roelstraete, “Field Notes,” 33.

has emerged as a thinking about *the curatorial*[40] as something separate from the activity of curating. Where curating can be said to deliver a promise (of an exhibition, for example) and utilises a number of skills and practices to achieve this goal, the curatorial opens up a space of theoretical reflection and speculation that upsets the process of fulfilling this promise.[41] Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff, founders of the PhD research programme *Curatorial / Knowledge,*[42] argue that the curatorial "explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator and views it as an event of knowledge." This is more or less exactly what I intend to do here—specifically with regard to the commission. It is not merely a matter of what I do and how I do it, but also what it means, what is stimulated and what is constrained, and what sort of thinking is made possible. Designating the commission as my mode of inquiry into the DR Archive exactly requires a thinking *through* the activity of curating[43]—both in the sense of carefully examining my operations as well as developing them as vehicles for thinking.

This propensity towards the curatorial is not a covert denunciation of curating—my practice as a curator is after all the impetus and driving force behind this project. But faced, as I am, with an archive, the finality of curating seems to suggest that we can indeed be done with the archive, with the past, and this prospect is, if we look to Derrida, not only frightening but also an impossibility.[44] The curatorial, on the other hand, is an ongoing activity that does not seek cessation but has acknowledged that the exhibition or any other momentary coming together of knowledges merely is a stopover in a process, as Rogoff has put it,[45] or, if we stay with Derrida: meaning is always deferred. The notion of the curatorial, in other words, would appear to be a crucial perspective when addressing an archive through curating.

What I propose to do in this thesis ultimately pertains to how the commission as an experimental research set-up enables me to articulate different ways of inquiring into the DR

[40] I use *curatorial* as an adjective on several occasions throughout this thesis to address, for example, my own curatorial practice—that is, my practice of curating. Only with the definite article, *the* curatorial, does the thinking described here apply.
[41] Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff, "Preface," in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, ed. Jean-Paul Martinon (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), ix.
[42] *Curatorial / Knowledge* was initiated in 2006 at Goldsmiths College in London and has contributed significantly to developing the thinking about *the curatorial*. A publication, *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, edited by Jean-Paul Martinon, was published in 2013, compiling a vast range of proposals as to what *the curatorial* might entail, but others, for example Beatrice von Bismarck and Maria Lind, have also proposed understandings of the notion of the curatorial in recent years. See Lind, "The Curatorial," 63–66, and Rogoff and Bismarck, "Curating/Curatorial," 21–38.
[43] Jean-Paul Martinon, ed., *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), back cover.
[44] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 120–121.
[45] Rogoff and Bismarck, "Curating/Curatorial," 27.

Archive. Rather than searching for answers to questions already determined, the artists and I conduct the inquiries and develop the questioning through our practices and approaches to the DR Archive. By commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson, I not only delegate the task of engaging with the DR Archive, I also designate my own mode of inquiry into the archive. One that indeed encourages the dialogic sensibility between different practices and modes of doing research that Bal speaks about—not only with regard to our artistic and curatorial practices but also by including a number of theoretical perspectives into the mix.

Questionability

I have already mentioned Derrida a couple of times, so let me expand a little on my use of theory, because while the workings of practice, both my own and that of the artists, constitute the nucleus of this project, I lean upon theory to open up its possible meanings. The purpose is not to discipline practice or instrumentalise the artworks, but rather to develop and complicate the issues that arise from these endeavours. My references to Derrida are not random: he is a recurrent interlocutor throughout the dissertation because both the DR Archive and the artists' works lend themselves to conversations and speculations in the company of his politics of memory. That said, Derrida is not the only theoretical voice in this dissertation; Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben in particular have also enabled me to develop the inquiries of Dahlberg and Olsson's artworks, and aspects of Bruno Latour's thinking have proved useful in relation to conceptualising the act of commissioning. I have no doubt that there is a number of other theoretical positions that could have contributed to opening up both the artistic and the curatorial work in interesting and critical ways, but these are the ones that I have found to resonate most intriguingly with the practices at work.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, my mode of operation is not one of digging to uncover knowledge hidden in the artworks and practices, but rather one that develops and actualises the problems that these manifestations and practices propose. Furthermore, although the nexus of this project is an archive, the project is, as a general rule, less concerned with the past as it was, and is considerably more interested in what can become of it; what it has to offer prospectively. Dahlberg and Olsson's artworks do not linger nostalgically with moments past; they engage, in different ways and through different temporalities, with such moments within the context and urgency of the present.[46]

[46] Like Huyssen has argued, "the act of remembering is always in and of the present, while its referent is of the past and thus in the past." Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 3–4.

Furthermore, the project as a whole is not an art-historical project. By making such a blunt statement I am not trying denigrate art-history but rather to make it clear that the purpose here is not art-historical in its nature. The project is, of course, conditioned by art-history to some degree; my decision to approach the archive by commissioning artists is underpinned by the archival propensity in contemporary art, already congealed into art-history. But I am not an art-historian. I am not looking to lay out an intricate historical tapestry of the different fields of knowledge that come together in this project; I merely rely on art-history to point me to a number of positions and tendencies that underpin the lines of inquiry that I wish to pursue.

What ultimately defines this project is practice; the project operates through practice and takes off from it. The artistic practices open up trajectories into or around the archive, and my own curatorial practice not only initiates the project but also comes to constitute a crucial component in its knowledge production. Within the field of practice research a distinction is often made between practice-based and practice-led research.[47] The major difference between the two, as I understand it, is the significance ascribed to the artefacts or creative outcomes of the practice such as images, performances, or exhibitions in practice-based research.[48] Here, the creative outcome constitutes an indispensable part of the research and is presented alongside the written component.[49] Practice-led research, on the other hand, "is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice."[50] In other words, practice-led research does not depend on the intensity and singularity of a creative outcome as such; rather, it is informed by practice, it aspires to extract knowledge from practice, and to advance this knowledge within or beyond practice.

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[47] Creativity & Cognition Studios, "Differences between Practice-Based and Practice-Led Research," accessed June 13, 2014, http://www.creativityandcognition.com/research /practice-based-research/differences-between-practice-based-and-practice-led-research/. There is, admittedly, quite a lot of variation when it comes to defining these modes of practice research, but like Andrea Philips, Director of Doctoral Research at the Art Department at Goldsmiths, I find these definitions put forward by the Creativity and Cognition Studios of the University of Technology Sydney both useful and affirmative. Philips, however, relies only on the definition of practice-based research and not practice-led research. Andrea Philips, "Why Practice-Based PhDs Are Political," in *Investigação Em Arte E Design: Fendas No Método E Na Criação = Research in Art and Design: Cracks in Method and Creation*, ed. José Quaresma, Fernando Paulo Rosa Dias, and Juan Carlos Ramos Guadix (Lisboa: Edição CIEBA, 2010), 70, n. 3.

[48] Creativity & Cognition Studios, "Differences between Practice-Based and Practice-Led Research".

[49] There are many different variations when it comes to how to present practice-based research, for example, some practice-based research programmes curtail the written component and focus more attention on the potentialities of the creative outcome as research in itself.

[50] Ibid.

I have to admit that I find myself in a pickle when trying to decide which of these two kinds of practice research resonate most affirmatively with this project. Of course, I could go with practice-based research by pointing to Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour as creative outcomes of my own curatorial practice, but these realisations were truly collaborative efforts between the artists and myself; we worked together to establish the final layout of Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour. In addition, these manifestations do not capture the scope of my curatorial work; its significance is not crystallised in these instances of display, but largely harboured in the curatorial operations that institute the project as such—that is, the act of commissioning. Turning away from the creative outcomes and focusing instead on the significance of practice shifts the mode of research from practice-based to practice-led, from the finality and significance of a creative outcome to the potentiality of practice at work. The mode of practice-led research would, in other words, seem to accommodate the kind of thinking and questioning that the notion of the curatorial encourages.

However, if we consider the artists' practices, I am very reluctant to dismiss the significance of their work as such within the context of this project, and that would indeed be the case if I were to frame this project as practice-led. I do not delude myself into believing that my analyses can exhaust the possible meanings warranted by the artworks, or that any or all readings can capture and convey the intensity of the artworks. The processes that the commission brings into being may be defined by finitude, but the works that bring these processes to a close are not as easily resolved. The artworks work and will continue to do so; they will lend themselves to other readings and produce meanings that differ from those I am able to propose here. I will therefore refrain from designating my mode of research as either practice-based or practice-led because such a distinction would lock the project into an unfortunate either/or. While this project ultimately gravitates towards the potentialities of practice rather than creative outcomes, I would like to also acknowledge the artworks' future production of meaning, a production that will indeed contribute to transforming and re-inscribing our understanding of the archive. I realise that readers of this dissertation can only experience Dahlberg and Olsson's works through the photographic documentation provided in this thesis and the online video documentation, but these works are essential in themselves and pivotal in obtaining a full understanding of this project. This dissertation sets out to develop a questioning into the DR Archive through curatorial and artistic practices; the artworks ensure that this work does not harden into answers.

Inquisitive Get-togethers

Wrapping up this introduction, I would like to bring together some points from the previous pages, viz., the curatorial care, my commission of Dahlberg and Olsson, and the undecidability that this project both encourages and is haunted by. If we take these points in reverse order, its undecidability partly hinges on the inscrutable distribution of what Derrida terms the *thing.* This thing, this spectre, which is not identical with itself,[51] appears incomprehensible to us. It may call for interpretation but at the same time it defies such designation. So when we, as is the case here, approach an archive, we cannot actually know what it is we are looking at and listening to. What we encounter are not matters of fact but something altogether more elusive and more uncertain—something that does not reveal itself to us. This unknowability is troubling, for sure, but it might just also be what makes the archive such a favoured haunt for knowledge production. Because if the archive was entirely transparent, univocal, and immediately comprehensible, would there be anything to truly learn from it? Would we bother to concern ourselves with the archive if it did not ceaselessly keep something from us? Does the archive not evoke our curiosity precisely because we cannot figure it out?

Now, I would argue that we almost never take on such problems on our own. Of course, not everyone resorts to literally asking someone else to join the inquiry, as I have done here, but do we not always gather around a problem a number of relevant and concerned parties that can help us identify and discuss the matter in question? Do we not negotiate, complicate, and dispute our problems with others, regardless of whether their presence is corporeal or only virtual, in the form of their writings? Rounding up such inquisitive get-togethers is how philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour proposes that we deal with matters that prove non-factual and uncertain, that is, matters of concern,[52] and this thesis revolves around two such disquieting matters. First of all, of course, the DR Archive, that—as I argue in Chapter 1—presents itself as a disconcerting thing, and around which my commission assembles Dahlberg and Olsson. By way of this coming together, the artists designate their respective matters of concern and begin to develop their inquiries. The ensuing artworks can also be considered matters of concern on account of their inherent complexity, and in Chapters 2 and

[51] The book in which Derrida develops his hauntology is precisely entitled *Specters of Marx*—there is always more than one of them (and less than one). Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 1–2.
[52] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (January 2004): 246. Latour further develops his notion of matters of concern in an article from the following year, see Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Mass. : [Karlsruhe, Germany]: MIT Press ; ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, 2005), 4–31.

3 I seek out conversation partners who, like myself, concern themselves with issues brought to the fore by the artworks, or parties that may contribute to the process of making these issues appear. In different ways, the artworks lend themselves to such gatherings; they trigger, as Latour says, "new occasions to differ and dispute."[53]

What is crucial in both cases described above is of course not only to set up these gatherings, but also to support and sustain them—to care for these precarious configurations. Latour assigns this attentive undertaking to the critic,[54] but following the reconceptualisation of the curator as someone who cares, it would indeed also seem to be an obvious task for the curator. I assemble by selecting and commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson to work with the DR Archive as well as by gathering a number of interlocutors around their ensuing artworks. And I care for these sometimes divisive get-togethers by enabling both the artists and the artworks to work and by supporting them as well as the configurations that they are part of through my curatorial practice.[55] What I propose to do in this thesis is, in other words, to revitalise the notion of curatorial care with a little help from Latour, Foucault and Derrida.

Thesis Structure

Following these introductory manoeuvres, the four chapters of this thesis will delve into my commission of Dahlberg and Olsson. Using Latour's notion of matters of concern as a simple model, the purpose of the first chapter, "Beginnings on End," is two-fold. I argue that the DR Archive not merely is something the artists and I are compelled to engage with, but that it also gives us reason to be concerned, and second, I investigate the artists' interactions with the DR Archive and argue how they constitute efforts to designate a matter of concern. The chapter opens with analyses of two instances of uncertainty that I have encountered in the DR Archive: a peculiar distribution of blue pieces of paper in a remote part of the archive and the question of the beginning(s) of the DR Archive. These analyses substantiate my initial inkling that we cannot know for sure what we are dealing with when we approach the DR Archive. The second half of the chapter deals first with Dahlberg's engagement with the DR Archive; it is based on her own written reflections on the process, and discusses both her initial reaction to the DR Archive (one of apathy) and her efforts to identify an archival

[53] Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik”, 5. I want to make clear that in the articles above Latour talks about objects and not artworks in particular, but I find that this notion of his also can be applied to art. The distinction between matters-of-fact and matter-of-concern is, however, not quite as effective in the arts, because artworks, almost by definition, would appear to be matters-of-concern.
[54] Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?”, 246.
[55] Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik”, 13.

document that lends itself to her work. Olsson's engagement with the DR Archive is much more elusive—not least because he decided to abandon the possibility of using any material from the DR Archive just a week before the premiere of his performance. My inquiry into Olsson's process is, for that reason, limited to a press photograph and a certain measure of speculation as to how he can be said to concern himself with the DR Archive by turning his back on it.

In the second chapter, "Time and Time Again," I engage in a close reading of Dahlberg's video work, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," which she produced in response to my commission, and I situate it in the context of her ensuing solo exhibition, *This Time It's Political*, which I curated at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde. By pursuing a number of repetitive motifs, I propose that the exhibition produces two modes, one of inoperability and one of operability. Based on a radio programme on working conditions, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" rehearses a number of activities that have been separated from the sphere of common use into a state of docility in which use is impossible; cost-efficient bodily movements, instrumentalised time—even the archival recording has been deprived of its use value. But by way of the video's iterations, these separations are, however, undone, and for a short while they become pure means.[56] The additional three works of the exhibition constitute minor, informal archives compiled and devised by Dahlberg, and, unlike "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," they hinge on cumulation and operability. In particular, "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" from 2006—which compiles almost 50 years of marginal notes from Swedish library copies of Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*—generates both collective agency and aspiration on account of its archival gesture. Wrapping up the chapter, I argue that the politics referred to by the title of the exhibition is performed exactly through these instances of inoperability and operability.

Chapter 3, "The Flash and The Spectre," proceeds by untangling the workings of the past in Olsson's performance, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio.* Here I propose that the performance at large produces two temporalities: one that is characterised by the flash as per Walter Benjamin's understanding of remembrance, and another, less conspicuous, temporality of the spectre that Olsson both channels and produces with his voice. In the first part of the chapter, I carry out a close reading of aspects of Olsson performance using three figures described by Benjamin—the collector, the storyteller, and the historian—as points of reference. Leaving behind the official documents of the DR

[56] This argument, of course, relies on Giorgio Agamben's notion of profanation, which I will extend on in more detail in Chapter 2.

Archive, Olsson explores the byways of radio history through a miscellaneous assortment of nugatory documents and objects. By tracing out the contours of these figures in Olsson's performance, I am able to elucidate the subversive potentiality of his digressive narrative. The second part of the chapter pursues a ghostly presence that haunts the performance even before it begins. In advance of the performance Olsson tells a humorous anecdote about a ventriloquist and a sound check, and this *exergue*-like anecdote summonses a host of disembodied voices. Using this anecdote as a starting-point, I trace an electrified history of spectral agency that unsettles the performance both temporally and epistemically.

Chapter 4, "Working Commissions", returns to the act of commissioning in order to flesh out my curatorial operations *post facto*. The main argument of the chapter is that the commission can be regarded as a response to a need of the place or context that it adheres to, in this case the DR Archive. By commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson I extend to them a specific undertaking, and in doing so I also acknowledge and designate a need for a certain kind of work to be done. The aim of this chapter is therefore to develop the commission as a mode of inquiry and to explicate methodological implications from my curatorial operations. Unpacking and conceptualising the act of commissioning enables me explicate a simple diagram of the commission, which maps out the relations of the configuration of curator, DR Archive, artists, and (the prospect of) artworks that the commission establishes. But while this diagram proves to be most useful when it comes to understanding the relations of the commission, it cannot account for the precariousness of the configuration. Both the artists' practices as well as the DR Archive require the work of an assiduous operator, a curator. I therefore propose that the notion of curatorial care is reinvigorated and modelled on Derrida's concept of the supplement in order to factor in the dependence and independence that determine the relationship between curator and artist. Derrida's curious supplement can also begin to account for the workings of the commission as a response to a need. Concluding the chapter, I reflect on the commission and the relations it establishes in the context of a co-operation.