

***The Revolt of the Bees***  
***Wherein the Future of the Paper-Hive is Declared***

Edited by Aaron Levy and Thaddeus Squire

## **The Revolt of the Bees**

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Essays by Anthony Grafton and Thomas Keenan

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For Robert Whitehead (1916-2002) and David Quinn (1924-2004)  
*In memoriam*

and for Meredith K. Rainey  
with gratitude

[...] And the flesh will fall back into the earth, and the horror  
into sweetness and the dark into the sun and the bees  
thus born.

—from Susan Stewart, "Bees" (inspired by Virgil's *Georgics*), *Columbarium*, 2003

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## Biographies

Anthony Grafton is the Henry Putnam University Professor of History at Princeton. He studied classics, history and history of science at the University of Chicago and University College London. His many honors include the Behrman Prize for Achievement in the Humanities at Princeton; a visiting professorship at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris; and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. He has delivered the J.H. Gray Lectures at Cambridge; the E.A. Lowe Lectures in Paleography and Kindred Subjects at Oxford; the Rothschild Lecture in the History of Science at Harvard, and the Meyer Schapiro Lectures at Columbia University. He served as Warburg Professor in Hamburg, Germany in 1998-99. Hailed by one critic as “historian extraordinaire,” Grafton is the author or editor of eleven books, including a major two-volume study of Renaissance humanist Joseph Scaliger. His intellectual interests range from the history of the classical tradition, particularly during the Renaissance; to the history of science; to the history of books and readers; and to scholarship and scholarly practices such as forgery and the citation of sources.

Thomas Keenan teaches media theory, literature, and human rights at Bard College, where he is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and directs the Human Rights Project. He is author of *Fables of Responsibility* (Stanford UP, 1997), and editor of books on the museum and on the wartime journalism of Paul de Man. His most recent publication is a collection, co-edited with Wendy Chun, called *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, from Routledge (2005). His current manuscript is called *Live Feed: Crisis, Intervention, Media*, about the news media and contemporary conflicts.

Aaron Levy is the Executive Director of and a Senior Curator at Slought Foundation. Since 1999, he has organized around 200 live events and exhibitions with artists and theorists critically engaging contemporary life. His publications include *Cities Without Citizens* (2004), which he edited with Eduardo Cadava as a companion volume to his Rosenbach Museum installation revisiting discussions about human rights and cities in Early America. He recently edited, with Jean-Michel Rabaté, *William Anastasi's Pataphysical Society: Jarry, Joyce, Duchamp and Cage* (2005), engaging the work of pioneering conceptual artist William

Anastasi in relation to his literary and artistic predecessors and contemporaries. “In which the thinking man finds himself...” is his first video production, and is included in this publication. It explores an archive in disarray in historic Founder’s Hall at Girard College in Philadelphia, and features a monologue adapted from a novel by Thomas Bernhard and read by Gary Indiana. He lectures on contemporary art and curatorial practice at the University of Pennsylvania.

Thaddeus A. Squire studied at Princeton University, as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Leipzig, Germany, and as an orchestral conducting student at Leipzig’s Hochschule für Musik und Theater “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.” As Artistic and Executive Director of Relâche, Inc. for four years, he commissioned and developed over twenty world premiere works by leading contemporary composers from the United States and abroad. Mr. Squire shifted Relâche’s identity toward large interdisciplinary projects, exemplified by *The Bell and the Glass*, an installation and sound-art performance piece commissioned from artist Christian Marclay, with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 2004, Mr. Squire founded Peregrine Arts, a multidisciplinary arts organization dedicated to producing, presenting, consulting and research across the fine and performing arts and humanities. Current projects include productions with artists Fred Ho, Ruth Margraff, Christian Marclay, Stephen Vitiello, Gavin Bryars and Bill Morrison, among others, alongside an annual presenting season in Philadelphia and consulting and research practices. He has served on numerous artistic and peer funding panels and is a Pennsylvania Humanities Council Commonwealth Speaker.

Michael Zansky is an artist who is currently represented by Briggs-Robinson Gallery and Gigantic ArtSpace (GAS), New York. Since the mid-1980s, he has had numerous solo exhibitions at galleries in New York and has participated in group exhibitions at venues including Exit Art, New York, the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Connecticut, and the Norton Museum of Art, Florida. He has also exhibited at White Box, White Columns, The Drawing Center, Artist’s Space, and, most recently, at ARCO, Madrid, in 2005. His work is part of public and private collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, Neuberger Museum, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Berkley Art Museum, and Prudential Life.

## Project Introduction: The Polemical Hive

Aaron Levy

*"On observing that the instinct of those little animals had surpassed the intelligence of man, I said within myself: 'Happy were it for the societies of the human race, did they possess the wisdom of those of bees!' and I began to form wishes in behalf of my country."*

—St Pierre, front piece to *The Revolt of the Bees* (London, 1828)

A beehive is more than just a receptacle used as a home for bees and the production of honey. The structure of the hive has historically been understood as a metaphor for the archive or library. The idea of the archive permeates the human experience, through our seemingly indomitable will to collect, organize, interpret and preserve the knowledge and artifacts of the world around us. This drive is also reflected in our will to organize and "collect" ourselves and our societies in ever-changing and shifting configurations and repositories.

It is also a metaphor for a living organism, and the living organism is a metaphor for the cultural organization, which is both the embodiment of and emblem for contemporary cultural practice. Extending the metaphor of the hive into the cultural realm suggests new and more hopeful visions of the cultural organization and the cultural construction of memory.

This publication and exhibition may be understood as a deliberate and extended commentary on how we define what counts as culture, and how we define our current cultural horizon. The exhibition took the form of an intervention on the level of the archive, in which beehive-related books at the University of Pennsylvania Rare Book and Manuscript Library were individually inventoried and selected. A new taxonomy for the hive was organically devised during this

process, and then distilled into eleven discrete lessons, such that an exhibition of otherwise disparate publications from as early as 1623 was possible.

The exhibition explored the ways in which libraries and archival institutions strive to represent a given culture in their collections, and the degree to which this commitment might also extend to particular and idiosyncratic metaphors such as the beehive. If books pertaining to the beehive abound in the University of Pennsylvania library, whether by design or by chance, is it not also reasonable to assume a similar diversity of books can be found in any other given cultural repository? And is material culture proof enough that a metaphor has been extensively employed in the past? The books that were included in the exhibition thus afforded the viewer opportunities to engage in larger discussions about how metaphors can be interpreted, and how they can be mobilized in the service of understanding contemporary art and archives.

Because this exhibition was intended in part for a University community, and as a dialogue with the library staff whose collection it engaged, rigorous scholarship was a prerequisite. The research phase took over one year from inception to exhibition, and involved a variety of search methodologies ranging from chance procedures to methodical operations. The random perusal of shelves of rare books gave way to and subsequently informed a genealogical and genetic scholarship that traced ideas and scholarship about the hive across different disciplines, periods, and geographies.

Against the frequent analogy of the museum as mausoleum for the storage and preservation of cultural artifact, the Pennsylvania colonist and polymath Francis Daniel Pastorius's (1651-1719/20) *The Bee-Hive*, a compilation of commonplace knowledge and verse miscellany, implies a dynamic and perpetually changing model for archival practice.<sup>1</sup> Pastorius's idea of joining metaphors concerning the accumulation of honey and the pursuit of knowledge in one publication served as a blueprint and the originating lesson for this exhibition.

Although the exhibition begins with Pastorius's *The Bee-Hive*, which presents honey as a form of knowledge, it comes to fruition with John Minter Morgan's *The Revolt of the Bees* (London, 1828), where knowledge is put in the service of overcoming inequality.<sup>2</sup> Morgan's publication, from which this project also takes its name, played a formative role by demonstrating how social critique can be viewed through the lens of the beehive. Although small in scale and overlooked by many library patrons, his publication is an elaborate commentary and satirical polemic about the socio-economic inequalities and hardships for many bees in his day. Moreover, its arguments about class welfare and economics anticipate by nearly 20 years Marx and Engels' *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). Morgan attributes the suffering of bees to the "unequal division of honey" and to the institutions and economies of the hive, and proposes the redistribution of wealth through less competitive and more cooperative means. Morgan evidently considers the publication of *The Revolt of the Bees* as a platform for proposing communitarian solutions to mollify the general state of 'dissatisfaction and turbulence' with the organizations of his day.

Historically, cultural organizations have been founded, built and sustained to ameliorate conditions of 'dissatisfaction and turbulence.' But Morgan was prescient in suggesting that altruistic pretenses often foster in organizations an inexorable and artificial desire to sustain and expand beyond their means, thus denying their own fragility and ephemerality. As a result, organizations are among the most overt and abundant embodiments of the will to permanence, and any attempt to promote a culture of non-permanence must begin on the level of the organization. Can we imagine our organizations operating without the impending threat of decline? Can we imagine organizations operating without consideration or fear of fragility and sustainability as they envision their futures? And can we imagine these organizations constantly evolving and regenerating?

Concerns such as these also prompted Thaddeus Squire and myself to initiate "The Alexandria Project: On the Future of the Organization," an event series at Slought Foundation co-presented with Peregrine Arts, Inc. that proposed a new culture of temporality and non-permanence through discussions with leading literary scholars, social theorists, and representatives of grant-giving organizations.<sup>3</sup> It took as its starting point a re-examination of incendiary metaphors and institutional antagonisms in the historical and contemporary avant-garde. The series took as its emblematic image the burning of the Library of Alexandria, and the first event began with a reading of Marinetti's polemical first Futurist manifesto of 1909, which sought to "sap the foundations of the venerable cities!" by questioning the cultural establishment of its time through incendiary aggressiveness. "The Alexandria Project," however, translated the literal incendiary desires of the Futurists into a purely conceptual framework and extreme metaphor as a way of striking at the heart of our cultural discomfort with the idea of non-permanence and change in all their forms.

What might our institutions look like were we to in fact take Marinetti's polemic seriously? How might we begin to resist existing edifices so as to perpetually construct new ones? What new forms and methodologies might then emerge for the dissemination and preservation of cultural artifact? These concerns were a motivating force for organizing not just the exhibition of material culture associated with metaphors of the beehive, but also a separate installation exploring the idea of the archive in disarray. The installation comprised a decentralized constellation of distortion lenses and theatrical devices, and was designed by artist Michael Zansky. The installation refracted images of the exhibition vitrines, so that the viewer was exposed to a variety of interpretations from any one vantage point.

Additionally, a video which I directed and which Michael helped produce was displayed in the installation on small monitors positioned behind the distortion lenses.<sup>4</sup> The video is included in this publication, and features the interior monologue of a demented man who lives in a decaying library. The organic state of the library is understood as a metaphor for his orphaned status in the world. In this sense, the video prompts the viewer to consider the ramifications of a collection in demise at a vulnerable and destructive moment in its material history. It also invites its audience to imaginatively recreate and reconfigure past and future uses of this site through contemporary practice.

In keeping with the regenerative impulse emphasized in this exhibition, the exhibition featured a commercially available observation hive filled with pages from a 17th-century edition of the King James translation of the Bible, printed by Bonham Norton and John Bill in 1619. It was included in the exhibition as a metaphoric overture: just as the observation hive permits us to observe the society of bees at work, this object permitted us to consider the paper-hive or

archive as equally amenable to observation, critique and perpetual reframing. Apropos the concepts of fragility and ephemerality central to the project, the pages that filled the observation hive were reclaimed in an already fragmented state from a private book collection that suffered acute water damage. Thus the object served as both a *momento mori* to the concept of the archive, and a rehabilitation of orphaned pages in the face of almost certain devaluation and disregard.

## II

At what point does a particular artistic or curatorial practice outlive its usefulness and become a decorative or obsolete performance? What constitutes today a curatorial practice of sufficient complexity and provocation? In an age of archival, institutional, and social critique, to whom or what is the curator responsible, and why? *The Revolt of the Bees* takes the form of a deliberation on the vexing questions outlined above about temporality and cultural value, so as to explore the horizon for curatorial practice.

Through their art, the historic avant-garde proposed an answer to questions of usefulness and obsolescence by seeking to manipulate the future and put art in the service of new ways of living—what Gilles Deleuze referred to in philosophical terms as the creation of new percepts, or perceptions. But art today rarely lives in this forward condition. In almost every case today art and curatorial practices do not create experiences but merely respond to pre-existing ones.

Devising alternatives to this form of cultural docility necessarily entails de-familiarizing the

practice of “art appreciation” for audiences, and evading practices associated with most cultural organizations. Instead of encouraging the passive absorption of static information, curators and audiences should be invited to assume a critical orientation towards contemporary life, and they should be encouraged to consider criticality itself as a source of dynamism and enjoyment. Another way this practice of de-familiarization can be achieved is by suggesting that the significance and implications of cultural programming unfolds over time, rather than through immediate gratification, such that live and documented forms of experience become structurally *dependent* upon each other. This maneuver has never been more important than today, when grant-giving organizations and the media embrace quantitative, rather than qualitative, assessments about the attendance, accessibility and visibility of cultural practices in evaluating their importance.

By adopting approaches that emphasize duration and experience, Louis Cabri has suggested that “the idea of importance itself becomes sublimated as processual, eventing-oriented actions,” and meaning and importance instead unfolds over time through a dialogic relationship between artist, critic and audience.<sup>5</sup> It is thus possible to imagine how cultural practice might “shift, from being that found in book or anthology, circulating within an economy of production and reception... to that found as an event, staged within, interrupting, slowing down circulation itself, within the paradox of a *produced reception*.” Cultivating critical practice on the level of the organization, and not just on the level of the individual curator, is crucial to the development and evaluation of this new form of reception.

Scholarship in the field of museum studies demonstrates that archives and presenting institutions are not simply repositories of cultural and historical treasure, but are also powerful

arbiters of cultural taste and historical production that tend to de-contextualize objects and practices by turning them into either artifacts of worth or worthless detritus. Artifacts are often presented in such a way as to be representative of entire sensibilities or movements, and can amass considerable value. They are also subject to ongoing processes of classification and preservation, as if to suggest that to master classification is to master knowledge and even the world. But artifacts tend to function best alongside other forms of experience and inquiry. This is to say that objects may serve as a prompt to or focus of history making, but they are not alone in this regard. This realization prompts a series of questions: must one already know about and trust the object to appreciate it? What other forms of reading and writing history may exist or one day emerge? Must one always accept that a curator is infallible and unbiased by his or her own historical circumstances?

Curators often introduce the public to institutions and their collections through interpretive maneuvers, and in this sense they contribute in profoundly visible and authoritative ways to discussions about what counts as culture. Curators such as the late Harold Szeemann or, more recently, Hans Ulrich Obrist, are considered by many to have pioneered new frontiers for the presentation of contemporary art, as well as the emergence of curatorial practices which are themselves forms of fine art. What would it mean if curatorial programming were to resist these developments and aspire neither to the role of steward over objects, nor the creation of new forms of fine art?

By suggesting that curatorial programming can avoid stewardship, I mean to critique the tendency of curators to place total trust in the facticity of objects (paintings, books, etc), such that objects in and of themselves confirm and document a given practice or site. Alternatively,

the publication which follows, and the exhibition which it documents, seeks to open up new possibilities for curatorial production by situating itself against the tendency to glorify the object to such an extent that it becomes unreliable, but also against the tendency to denigrate the object altogether.

By suggesting that curatorial programming can avoid becoming another form of fine art I mean to suggest that curatorial practice should be, first and foremost, in the service of concept creation rather than object-oriented aesthetics. This curatorial approach can be understood as upholding the spirit of some conceptual art from the 1960s and 1970s, insofar as its discursive focus lies beyond the arena of art alone, and insofar as it invariably adopts a self-critical format.

A primary legacy of conceptual art from that period was the realization that discursive interventions could themselves be constitutive of an actual practice or organization. As Charles Harrison of the collective *Art & Language* reminds us, conceptual art from the 1960s and 1970s was concerned with “the idea of ideas as discursive items, as *art*.”<sup>6</sup> But as Harrison notes, this realization was “a far harder one to sustain in some practical and social space. It required that the hypothesized object be seen not as ‘the art’, but as the object of an inquiry for which the status of art was more-or-less strategically claimed.” I understand this to mean that conceptual art functioned best as a philosophical practice that masqueraded as a form of fine art, and that did not lend itself uncritically to artifactual form because of a profound skepticism for art as object.

To curate an exhibition is much more than an opportunity to impart or bestow knowledge

about objects according to a narrative of art historical progress or periodization; it is an opportunity to be introduced to, and in turn contribute to the emergence of, new forms of cultural production and reception which make possible an active and participatory public. This publication seeks to demonstrate that it also presents an opportunity for all parties to judge and be judged by others at a time when, as Thomas Keenan suggests in this publication, public discourse and the public sphere is always already disappearing in the liberal democratic state.<sup>7</sup> The vibrancy of our practices and our organizations may well be secured by the degree to which they address this problematic and find the maturity to accept critique. In so doing, organizations can encourage an enduring longing for a society in which new forms of discourse and collectivity may be permitted to emerge and flourish.

### III

While many organizations strive to cultivate new forms of discourse, these organizations are in fact constantly at risk of limiting discursive possibilities. One example of this dynamic, whereby a rhetoric of advancement has the inverse impact, is the living history museum known as Colonial Williamsburg. The experiential approach to teaching history through the use of interactive displays was pioneered at Colonial Williamsburg and has become increasingly popular today.

As early as 1977, Cary Carson, then Colonial Williamsburg’s Vice President for Research, explained how exhibitions provide curators with opportunities to provoke and confront the public with disagreeable aspects of the past and present. “I want [the public] to go away

disturbed," he wrote. "I see this museum as a device to make Americans look at aspects of both the past and the present that they may not want to see."<sup>8</sup> How might organizations such as Colonial Williamsburg, Carson wondered, teach a form of history that was not also a form of escapism? The pamphlet in which Carson's comments appeared was published by Colonial Williamsburg to address the perception it had become educationally moribund in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A new didactic orientation for the museum had been envisioned in which the reconstructed environment of Colonial Williamsburg would become a "laboratory" through which to examine social relationships rather than 'as a storehouse of moral precepts."<sup>9</sup>

The radical messages of the new social history at Colonial Williamsburg, however, quickly declined into a form of mimetic realism or kitsch. Live demonstrations and presentations were presented to the public as objective data rather than historical recreation. Curatorial programs at Colonial Williamsburg that were initially devised to make the Historic Area 'come alive' with provocation and criticality gave way to live demonstrations featuring actual shit, sheep, oxcarts, beehives, and crafts.<sup>10</sup> Worse yet, interpreters often manipulated accepted history in narrating the past by explaining, for example, how revolutionary-era slaves had relatively civilized and decent lives free from cruelty and exploitative dependence.<sup>11</sup>

Handler and Gable's research on this subject helps us to realize that the faith of the new social historians from the 1970s in social science was itself a form of ideology. With its rhetoric of laboratories, experiments, and research, social science was no replacement for the ideology that preceded it. The original conviction that ongoing research would uncover more facts and open up new avenues of accuracy and progress had been left entirely untouched: the goal

was still to recreate at all costs a colonial American city as it existed in the mid-eighteenth century. But this approach integrated all too well with a narrative of progress. "To teach that the past was not tidy and harmonious but dirty and unjust," they argue, "often reinforces the public's belief in the superiority of the modern world."<sup>12</sup>

Thus the mistake of Colonial Williamsburg, Handler and Gable argue, was that a fact-based interpretation of the past was made possible through a "constructed ensemble of objects... treated as a primary reality."<sup>13</sup> The problem with such an inductive approach is that the past is not always embodied in objects, and our understanding of objects are themselves constructions. By not acknowledging the interpretive component one eliminates what Handler and Gable consider to be the utility of history as a vehicle for social criticism. This approach thus eliminated altogether the possibility that a given ensemble of objects could provide alternative readings, and could speak to alternative forms of critique and collectivity.

#### IV

What precisely do we mean when we use the term "alternative"? And how is our understanding of the term influenced by temporal considerations? There is a peculiar tendency in contemporary art and criticism to equate the term *alternative* with particular anti-institutional sensibilities and spaces dating from the 1960s, and to note its consequent periodicity and inapplicability as a productive lens for understanding contemporary practice. A profound hostility to conventional architectural spaces, after all, was visible in cultural practices of the 1960s and 1970s and is far less visible in practices today. Photographs of

PS1 at its inception as a cultural organization suggest not the raw and unaltered warehouse motif now *de rigueur* for any contemporary space, but, as Martin Beck quotes former *Artforum* critic Nancy Foote, “a disaster area ambience” that could be “brutalized, destroyed, completely restructured.”<sup>14</sup>

As recently as the late 1990’s, Julie Ault writes in her acclaimed *Alternative Art New York, 1965-1985*, spaces such as these were not uncommon, and “the notion of the alternative was not entirely outmoded. A mere six years later, the term has little currency. [...] Is the concept of alternative any longer viable or desired?” Ault continues, somewhat hysterically. “Where has the alternative gone?”<sup>15</sup> Martin Beck similarly argues in the same volume that “the alternative space as we have known it... has... become a thing of the past. This apparent obsolescence doesn’t mean, however, that there is no longer a need to push the existing boundaries of the established.”<sup>16</sup>

Traditional hierarchical distinctions and the possibilities for alternative culture have evidently eroded. Organizations have undergone tremendous expansions in legitimacy and visibility, and they now participate in official public culture rather than the unofficial and alternative cultures from which they emerged.<sup>17</sup> But what are the implications of suggesting that the concept of the alternative is historically specific and thus inadmissible today? It is possible to detect a suspicion on the part of Ault and Beck that art perhaps once was, but is no longer, a privileged social space for critique. And also that art once was, but is no longer, capable of resisting contemporary institutions and market forces. While these authors affirm the need to challenge and disrupt the homogeneous production of cultural value, this disruption merely takes the form of a defensive maneuver against “the existing boundaries of the established.”

Once again, contemporary art and arts organizations are unable to contest boundaries and instead merely respond to them. As we look to the future, how might curatorial practices aspire to evade, rather than accept, boundaries? How might we envision a curatorial environment that acts as a cultural stimulant?

## V

The conceptual work of artists and architects Arakawa + Gins embodies the critical and proactive approach to cultural production outlined above, and to which this book hopes to contribute. As is the case with *The Revolt of the Bees*, their work explores new ways to create and codify knowledge.

Since 1963, Arakawa and Madeline Gins have worked in collaboration to produce visionary, boundary-defying practices.<sup>18</sup> Among these, the Site of Reversible Destiny-Yoro opened in October 1995 as an “experience park,” and was conceived around the theme of encountering the unexpected. By guiding visitors through various unexpected experiences as they walk through its component areas, the Site provides visitors with opportunities to rethink their physical and spiritual orientation to the world.

In September 2001, Jean-Michel Rabaté and I began to explore how their architectural work might be mobilized in the service of ameliorating the quality of life in Philadelphia. Their subsequent proposal addressed the impoverishment and blight that closes off so many possibilities for Philadelphia residents, and utilized land condemned through the city’s

Neighborhood Transformation Initiative. The final version of their proposal, "Living Body Museum," ultimately appeared in *Cities Without Citizens*, a publication Eduardo Cadava and I edited in 2004.<sup>19</sup> Our publication engaged in discussions about cities and human rights in early America and contemporary life, and we included their project as an example of how artists and theorists might begin to reconceptualize these fields of thought.

Arakawa + Gins have often insisted, in the style of the historic avant-garde, that human flourishing necessitates not just alternative practices but also alternative social structures. Few artists of the late twentieth century, however, have embodied this drive to create alternative social structures so well, by creating work that constantly challenges us to reinvent and to desist from foreclosing on any possibility. Their work invites us to positively consider organic architecture and its ramifications for cultural practice, so it should come as no surprise that their architectural plans also resemble the honeycomb structure of the beehive. Their work has served as an inspiration and guiding force for this publication, and was featured in the first vitrine of *The Revolt of the Bees* exhibition.

In his introduction to a double issue of the journal *Interfaces* devoted to their work, Rabaté suggests that Arakawa + Gins, through work such as their park at Yoro and their proposal for the "Living Body Museum," have in fact attempted a revolution in thought. "What Arakawa and Gins have done for forty years now," he writes, "has been to act upon Foucault's admonitions by investigating the conditions of possibility of a new episteme that would take stock of the exhaustion of the old humanistic paradigm."<sup>20</sup> Their work attempts new futures for contemporary life through the re-arrangement of knowledge, and invites us all to rethink "concretely and dynamically the foundation of what makes us 'human beings.'"

## Notes

1. Francis Daniel Pastorius, *His Hive, Mellitophium Alvear or, Rusca Apium, Begun Anno Do[m]jini or, in the year of Christian Account 1696* (Germantown: 1651-1719/20).
2. John Minter Morgan, *The Revolt of the Bees* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1828), 9.
3. For more information on and recordings from the "The Alexandria Project: On the Future of the Organization," a discursive event series, see <http://slought.org/series/Organizations/>
4. *In which the thinking man finds himself in a gigantic orphanage*, prod. Slought Foundation, dir. Aaron Levy, 2004. For more information, consult the enclosed DVD or Credits and Acknowledgements (p. 85).
5. Louis Cabri, "Notes on Recording & Performance @ Slought on the Web," University of Alberta, Archiving Modernism Conference, Edmonton, Canada, July 26, 2003. For an online version, see: <http://slought.org/content/21035/>. A subsequent version is also available: Louis Cabri, "Discursive Events in the Electronic Archive of Postmodern and Contemporary Poetry," *ESC* 30.1 (March 2004): 51-72.
6. Charles Harrison, *Essays on art & language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 49. For more on conceptual art, see: Charles Harrison, *Conceptual art and painting: further essays on Art & Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).
7. Thomas Keenan, "No Ends in Sight," *The Revolt of the Bees* (Philadelphia: Slought Books, 2005), 31.
8. Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The new history in an old museum: creating the past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 67.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Handler and Gable, 74.
11. Handler and Gable, 115-117.
12. Handler and Gable, 131.
13. Handler and Gable, 81.

14. Martin Beck, "Alternative: Space," *Alternative art, New York, 1965-1985: a cultural politics book for the Social Text Collective*, ed. Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 259. The publication in which this essay appears was the catalog for a 1996 exhibition entitled: "Cultural economies: histories from the alternative arts movement, NYC" held at The Drawing Center, New York. P.S.1 was founded in 1971 by Alanna Heiss as The Institute of Art and Urban Resources Inc., and was primarily dedicated to the transformation of abandoned and underutilized buildings in New York City into exhibition, performance, and studio spaces for artists. It merged with the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1999.

15. Julie Ault, "For the Record," *Alternative art, New York, 1965-1985*, 9.

16. Martin Beck, 276.

17. Igor Kopytoff, "Public Culture: A Durkheimian Genealogy," *Public Culture: Bulletin of the Project for Transnational Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 16.

18. For more information on work by Arakawa + Gins, see Arakawa and Madeline Gins, *Architectural body* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2002); Arakawa and Madeline Gins, *The mechanism of meaning* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988); Michael Govan, *Reversible destiny: Arakawa/Gins* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1997); and their website: <http://reversibledestiny.org/>

19. Arakawa and Madeline Gins, "Living Body Museum," *Cities Without Citizens*, ed. Eduardo Cadava and Aaron Levy (Philadelphia: Slought Books, 2001), 243-257 and rear cover illustration.

20. Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Introduction," *Interfaces* 21-22 (2004): 5.

## No Ends in Sight

Thomas Keenan

*I would stop celebrating loss, if I could figure out what replaces it.*

—Lynne Tillman

*MUSEUM...We play here daily until the end of the world.*

—Marcel Broodthaers

*Museum.* ... Gr. *mouseion*, a seat of the Muses ... *Muse.* ... Gr. *mousa* ...: pre-Hellenic \**montya*, f. Indogermanic root \**mon-* (-*men-* -*mn-*) to think, remember, etc. One of nine sister-goddesses, the offspring of Zeus and Mnemosyne ....

—Oxford English Dictionary

*Is the museum as we have experienced it coming to an end? Has it outlived its definitions, from classical to postmodern, and, if so, what might become of it? Such a reflection on the possible disappearance of the museum cannot be separated from an examination of its aims and purposes, its ends, and so the question is that of the ends of the museum. At stake is nothing less than the memory and the promise of our culture. But "our" culture and "the" museum—as an institution, an idea, and a practice—are not, could not be, just one thing. In fact, what compels our attention are the ways in which this institution has developed into an expression of multiple desires and goals, which now, more than ever, seem at odds with one another. Classically, the museum was oriented toward the preservation and conservation of the canon of art history and aesthetics. Modernism gave it the task of embodying the utopian and recuperative power of art, and expanded our notions of what belonged in it. Today, the museum often seeks to become a space where a new community of cultures and histories*

*challenges inherited aesthetic paradigms. These heterogenous definitions and intentions have not simply succeeded one another, but instead often co-exist in an institution that envisions itself as directed toward the fulfillment of them all. Is this museum possible?*

*The purpose of this reflection cannot be simply to imagine a museum of the future, nor to recall nostalgically what the museum once was or might have been. What is required is rather a critical genealogy of the museum. This implies not so much a search for its roots, as if history were only a continuous progression from an origin, but a careful theoretical investigation of the museum's uneven developments. What are the epistemological presuppositions of this institution, which is also to say, what are its social, economic, and political stakes? The goal here is neither to describe situations nor to prescribe solutions, but rather to analyze the ways in which the museum can be imagined within, and without, the histories and institutions which have overdetermined it.*

—from the proposal for "The End(s) of the Museum," John G. Hanhardt and Thomas Keenan<sup>1</sup>

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### Notes

1. *The end(s) of the museum [Els límits del museu]*, organized by John G. Hanhardt and Thomas Keenan, was on display at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona, March-June 1995, and included work by Janine Antoni, Christian Boltanski, Marcel Broodthaers, Sophie Calle, Bill Fontana, Joan Fontcuberta, Andrea Fraser, Dan Graham, Jamelie Hassan, Ilya Kabakov, Louise Lawler, Antoni Muntadas, Julia Scher, and Francesco Torres. This essay was first published in the exhibition catalog, *The end(s) of the museum [Els límits del museu]* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1995).

### Anachronism.

Have museums ever seemed more anachronistic than now...not simply the houses and guardians of the past, but somehow themselves relics of the past, even of several pasts? Today, there are so many protests against and objections to what these institutions have become that their very existence, their *raison d'être*, is imperiled. To list the critiques, one after another, is to sound a repetitive litany: boring, monotonous, but systematically taking its toll. What's wrong with museums? The objects they collect are threatened with irrelevance in the age of global information and entertainment technologies, from television to computers, and of vast reservoirs of electronically-archived data. Their complicity with and participation in the maintenance of dramatic inequalities of wealth, their functioning as arbiters of value, and the ease with which they can assist in the legitimization of transnational capital and the financialization of the globe, have rendered them increasingly suspect. The cultural homogeneity, the shared canon of values and ends, and even the nationalism that they often seem to presuppose seems increasingly insupportable, if not unavailable, in an age of proliferating, fragmented and hyphenated identities and crumbling national borders. Museums rarely manage to address anything like a representative public—and the dream of a common public sphere, or a public in general, to which they nevertheless appeal has been cast in serious doubt, both in its philosophical foundations and by the emergence of counter-public spheres and new public realms, especially those of the media and mass culture. The museum's presupposition of a visitor or a spectator uninflected by sexual difference, the unconscious, or history and its scars, seems naive at best and authoritarian at worst, and certainly untenable in its ontology of consciousness or subjectivity. And the claims to knowledge, to a relative agreement about meanings and a relative neutrality of presentation,

and the status and value of the art object itself, have been challenged at their foundations. What are museums for?

These critiques have undeniable force—indeed, in one language and another, they are at work in the arguments made by the work exhibited in "The End(s) of the Museum." But they are not all that is said or done here. What difference does it make that the critiques take place in this very place, the museum, that they seek to contest? The challenges are far-reaching, but they do not simply proclaim that the museum is finished. The question of what museums might be "for" testifies to a certain fidelity, not to the museum's thought of itself so much as to something that might remain possible within it. To begin with, we can imagine the institution's response to these objections: it will take them to their very end.

Has the museum *ever* seemed so anachronistic? The tense of the question, with its gesture toward the ultimate, might lead to an apocalyptic version of the thought: museums have, finally and decisively, lost touch with their animating principles, surpassed their originating aims, and no longer correspond to their purposes. They have left their reasons behind, transformed themselves into things that have pushed them too far beyond the limits of their originary definitions. No longer classical, nor modern, nor even postmodern, they have reached an end, having arrived somewhere beyond or out of contact with their ends. Museums are exhausted.

This catastrophic (in more senses than one) reasoning can itself be animated by a variety of goals, even contradictory ones. It could find for itself echoes as diverse as a radically phenomenological thought of "the end of philosophy" or a popular post-Cold War notion of "the end of history." We can imagine conservative and radical versions: perhaps museums have lost sight of goals that ought still to be theirs, or perhaps they have wisely put those outdated

ends behind them. There are only ghosts of museums now, they say, one sadly and the other with relief. In any case, they share a notion of temporality and teleology which returns them to precisely the origins which the museum claims for itself—loss and the imminence of the end.

Museums are built on loss and its recollection: there is no museum without the threat of erasure or incompleteness, no museum not shadowed by the imagination of the impending destruction of what it therefore seeks to stabilize and maintain. Or, to be more exact, we can say that the museum finds in loss its most powerful *alibi*. Elsewhere, something is said to be nearing its end, threatened with extinction, and demands memory and protection. There is inevitably something of the cemetery and the epitaph where the museum is concerned—even in the most avant-garde or *au courant* of contemporary museums. The end is the goal, or rather, the postponement of the end—at the level of representation or presentation—but this deferral depends on the imminence of the disaster. The museum wants to be a salvational and sheltering institution, a machine for preservation and transmission, an archive of what is lost or at risk of disappearing and a mechanism for re-animating it, a platform that allows it once again to communicate with the present. Loss and the fear of destruction, especially after the exposure of the fragility of a collective identity, is a terrible stimulus to preservation and to a hygienic ordering of the patrimony and its legatees—nothing teaches us this as well as the violence that constantly accompanies responses to this fear, today in Bosnia, Rwanda, or the corridors of Western state power. Museums defend traditions, they remember and represent, gather together in collections and exhibitions what needs to be rescued or exposed—whether as tradition or avant-garde, center or margin, orthodoxy or heterodoxy—because it is endangered, in its physical existence or its significance. Museums shelter not so much objects as meanings, and their work is that of articulating, linking and arranging them in a network of significance.

The museum, seat of the muses, marks a space and time for memory, a memory pointed straight into the future. That is why they are so often sites of struggle: founded or undermined, raised or shelved, funded or abandoned. Museums come down to threat and loss, and the memory that finds its origin in this experience of erasure.

At least that's what they say, and often what they do. According to this "finalist" scenario, one option remains. If the museum is itself threatened, if it now runs the risk of anachronism (and this must not be taken for granted), then the moment has arrived for nothing less than a museum for museums, a site to mark and remember the work that museums have done, to record their origins and their purposes, chart their successes and failures, and gather together the traces of their existence—not merely to celebrate or to mourn, we hear the institution intone, but to evaluate them critically. Now, goes this story, museums themselves require protection and preservation, shelter from their own irrelevance or anachronism. Somehow they demand to be recalled in their turn, having outlived themselves, surviving now only as ghostly reminders of some increasingly forgotten will to remember. And nothing does this work of recollection better than the museum.

The dialectical inversion is predictable and powerful, the elegant maneuver of an institution founded on absence and dedicated to its negation and recovery in turn. At the end of the museum, a last museum. The speculative wager would put the entire institution at stake, risk the entire history and meaning of the museum as a project, in order to recuperate just that unity, that determinate totality of a purpose which only finally comes to recognize itself in the face of its annihilation. When all is lost, rescue the loss and with it the all. Nothing would be better suited to perform this labor of negation, which is to say, the negation of the negation,

than the critical work that seeks to put the museum to its end. To the extent that it returns the museum to its origins in loss, it allows the institution the glance of self-recognition and the symmetry of recuperation: the museum is over, long live the museum. At the end, its own end, the museum recognizes and reconstitutes itself as the very institution of that loss.

Speculative dialectic, or *mise-en-abyme*? The wager and the pathos of disaster are the desperate strategies of an institution which has run out of ways to think about itself, that returns to its origins—that is, to the origin—just when they have the least to offer. There are other ways to interpret the contemporary crisis of the museum, other strategies for thinking about the putative threats to the institution, and new ways to evade the claims of the origin and the hegemony of the end (in every sense). “The End(s) of the Museum” points in many of these other directions, aiming less to stage the crisis and make it available for specular recuperation than to inscribe, within the institution “itself,” the ways in which it might differ from itself, expose it to its (own?) divergence from its ends.

#### **Loss (without end)**

Just how authoritative is the origin? If the museum appears to be finished—captured by some reified ideal of collection and preservation, or mourning the passage of an abandoned dream of utopia and critique, or repossessed by a multiculturalism that refuses to challenge the concept of culture at its foundation, or torn between the confusion of all of these goals—this verdict can only be pronounced if we continue to subscribe to the claims it makes for its origins. Why limit the institution to its aims or its alibis, and to the convergence of these aims

in an ideal of shelter? If the museum has survived, managed indeed to communicate in spite of these threats, perhaps it owes its future to this very deviation (loss, yes, but now in affirmative sense), to the inevitability of the *dérive* that has led the institution away from its (imagination of its) originary desire. Not a loss of the origin but a loss at the origin, a loss that does not befall the origin (of the museum, of the objects that it shelters and allows to speak, of the public and the subject) but rather marks it from the start as destined to an open future, to a divided identity and an errant path.

In the end, as at the beginning, there should be deferral. Whether or not something is determinate “in the last instance,” the lonely hour of the last instance never comes, Althusser said...which, while it releases some of the humanitarian pathos, cannot come simply as a relief, since this “never” has not seemed in the least to frustrate the technicians and theorists of so many final solutions in this barbaric century. Offspring of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the museum remembers these catastrophes, these rises and falls, it mourns and marks them—violence with memory. If it has always been driven by this goal, this fear of the end that somehow also needs its imminence to keep going, then there has also always been another museum, other museums, at work within the dominant interpretation. The museum is incomplete, endless: its ends—the end itself—have never succeeded in governing it. No end of the museum, no apocalypse (not now, as Derrida so unforgettably put it), and certainly no museum for museums. Not because the museum is alive and well, a vital institution for the next millennium—absolutely not. And not because the museum is dead and gone, on its way out, lost, or at a loss, either. But rather because the entire teleology that animates this scenario, the thought of presence and its erosion and its maintenance (in time, language, representation), is governed by the very metaphysics that has itself rendered the museum

questionable. If the museum sees itself as imperiled, threatened by forces external to it (media, mass culture, virtual reality) or exhausted internally by a certain (let's risk the word) decomposition, then the apocalyptic tone is produced out of the thought to which it attributes its animation in the first place—the thought that the presence of the originating intention saturates the institution, gives it its *raison d'être* and defines its existence...in a word, the thought of "the first place" itself—and which makes possible an institution organized around the positing and the recovery of loss. So many possible futures for the museum emerge in the deconstruction of this origin, in its exposure to its own confusion and incompleteness—this time thought not as weakness and impending doom but as difference and affirmation. History, like the museum, remains open.

For a museum without end, without ends in sight. Does this imply an institution cut adrift from its founding purposes, released from its goals and ends, abandoned to aimless uncertainty, but for the certainty of catastrophe? Or does it on the contrary suggest a museum unbound, voracious in acquisitions and appropriation, omnivorous in its hunting and gathering, let loose to pursue those ends with abandon, to shelter everything and anything imaginable?

Neither. The museum without ends (in sight) can only be open-ended, incomplete, not simply lacking in but resistant to totality. It hesitates about utopia, especially the yawning utopias of utter endlessness and irrestriction, sheer de-limitation and libertinage. These are the fantasies of a subject or agent freed into its long-awaited sovereignty, unshackled by norm or law, or of the empire that knows borders, as Marx said somewhere, only as more territories for conquest. And the museum open enough to raise questions about these borders and these ends, especially about its own rich reimagining of its origins in collecting and sheltering and

the protection against loss, must first of all raise questions about that rampaging subject itself, the self in its auto-infiniting will to power. The absence of purposes is merely an incitement for this subject, a chance for the decisive transgression, and not a critical gesture at all. Just as the proclamation of *the end*, once and for all, merely stabilizes for a subject its present and the security of its position in that present. The museum puts precisely this thought of subjectivity—and with it that tradition of shelter, foundation, loss, and presence—into crisis.

For a museum of crisis, not another monument to crisis, not another effort to heal or reconcile the wounds and losses of history, to bring a shattered or eviscerated subject and public back together again, to overcome and transcend the divisions of our culture which is not one. The aim of reconciliation is indistinguishable from the dream of loss and its recovery, of a solution that will finally put an end to the danger. Neither art nor the museum will clear up the distortions, quiet the questions, provide critical distance and a harmonious reunion. Conflict and opacity live at the heart of the museum "itself," just as they structure society and culture and politics as impossible totalities, necessarily divorced from origins or conclusions.

#### **Polyunsaturates.**

Thank goodness (or something), there is no end-ism here, no concerted movement that seeks to put an end to the museum forever, that aims out of deranged fidelity to some imagined origin to turn the museum onto itself in a final celebration of its own loss. To the extent that the glimmerings of such a discourse are audible today, they come from the institution itself, the one that seems all too eager to proclaim its own anachronism, to trumpet its threatened

character and invoke its founding principles as the very shoals on which it founders. The museum, erased, like a figure drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea? Derrida—now more than a quarter century ago in “Les fins de l’homme” (from which this project borrows its name)—alerted us to the danger of this rhetoric of the end as the exemplary ruse of a humanism at its limits. The museum that loudly proclaims its own devastation, from end to end, rests comfortably at the core of this tradition.

“The End(s) of the Museum” offers, in bits and pieces, another story, another set of stories. Necessarily incomplete and hybrid, disjointed and often contradictory, at many levels, the exhibition—or rather, the *exposition*, of the museum to the museum, without symmetry or speculation, without end, but rather in the manner of the detotalizing rhetorical figure of the *mise-en-abyme*—insists on an affirmation of conflict and crisis without conciliation or reconciliation, without finality or recovery of or at the end. Like the boy on the cocoa tin holding a cocoa tin, with a boy on it holding in his turn a cocoa tin with a boy on it..., and so on, this abyssal figure affirms, at once unreadably and insistently, that no end is in sight. The figure, though, is not that of the endlessness of the infinite regress or the specular play of mirrors, but an affirmative refusal of this comforting totality. We lose the stability of our point of reference, seeking to read the *mise-en-abyme*, but without managing to read it or to evade the inelectable fact that, like it or not, it will have read us and “our” predicament. There is nothing new, in fact, about this gesture. The structure of detotalization or irrecoverable crisis, of the public and the subject (in another vocabulary, the visitor) split from itself, makes the institution necessary. If we could take the totality—the loss and its recovery for instance, or the continuous derivation from the origin, or the preservation of the object and its meanings for the future—for granted, we would have no need of museums. What museums have tended to

treat simply as loss, the loss of something formerly present, is itself an interpretation of another separation, a movement of irreconcilable difference without end. Loss or end is the name (earlier we called it an *alibi*, which marks the gesture toward some primordial “elsewhere”) given to a divergence or a discord in view of its eventual solution, one that projects back onto a past moment of imaginary unity the suppression of differences it seeks to achieve in the future. But the transparency of this resolution remains a ruse. The museum depends on the ‘originary’ divergence, which makes possible—and problematic—all that it does: memory, community, and even critique. But it cannot guarantee them, and it cannot erase the opacity that makes them necessary. We speak precisely because we can never be sure of being understood. We act together in public, we enter the polis and claim our rights, because our common humanity is uncertain and always subject to contest. The dissonance, the distortion, the dissensus, dissemination and ambivalence that structure our speaking and acting make the museum—no matter what its aspirations, goals, or would-be origins—an institution of crisis. This puts it at risk, surely (it does not *succeed* in institutionalizing the irreconcilable), but this risk is its condition.

The questions about the ends of the museum depend on this polyunsaturated condition, and that is why they cannot and must not be reduced to a proclamation of the end. The crisis of the museum is glaringly evident, but the work here calls for different interpretations of that crisis. It demands new readings of the critical categories with which we began: object and media, subject and public, memory and history. The museum is no more at its end than the public sphere is lost, which is to say, the public sphere is always already disappearing—that is its definition in the democratic tradition, since its boundaries and possibilities are always subject to precisely the renegotiation it seeks to render possible—by virtue of its publicity.

"The dissolution of the markers of certainty," with which Lefort has defined the emergence of the public and its rights, the democratic invention, today affects the museum as its possibility and its risk. Likewise, the memory at work in the museum must break with its recollective, interiorizing, monumentalizing tradition and expose it to the unreachable anteriority of the past and to the traumatic history that affronts understanding. No analytic reduction of the museum to its origins—whether in the good conscience of 'our heritage' or the guilty fact of 'the economy,' whether in the sanctity of the aesthetic or the pleasure of the touristic—suffices to come to terms with its radically open-ended structure. Related to the past, but to a past that it can never master, the museum rises over a gap and a divergence that tolerate no suture. "There are no 'primary structures,'" said Broodthaers in a somewhat different context, but, as always, he was writing about the museum: devoted to the primary, it remains all superstructure, utterly mediated, unsaturated by origins, open to the fragility and the irreducibility of the loss it, confusedly, seeks to reverse. "We play here daily until the end of the world," or, as he put it later, "all day long, until the end of time."

Things fall apart, said Chinua Achebe. Indonesia's Pramoedya wrote simply of "things vanished." This terrible century, now coming to an end, indelibly marked with a Holocaust and with so many other holocausts, calls out for memory, but not simply for the remembrance content to commemorate. The confidence that the disaster might be avoided in the future by the courageous act of recollection seems increasingly misplaced. What would it be to remember what is not simply lost but altogether vanished? Can we imagine a museum that would not content itself with the pathos of this memory destined to fail, a museum that wanted to interrupt the course of history and its catastrophes rather than simply recall them? Nothing replaces the loss—far from marking the end of the museum, this is why there are museums, with impossible responsibilities, and without end.

## The Commonplace Bee: A Celebration

Anthony Grafton

*The Revolt of the Bees* artfully celebrates a set of images and associated practices that dominated the world of high culture for centuries.<sup>1</sup> It teaches us to imagine with new vividness how early modern playwrights and poets, scholars and scientists, ladies and schoolboys went about the vital task of mastering and using books—at a time when books were the most powerful source of knowledge about life, the universe and everything, and a new way of reading could bring about events as radical as the Protestant Reformation and the English Civil War. This collection of evidence and the imaginative and sometimes subversive way in which it is displayed make a distinctive contribution to the new field of history of books and reading—an interdisciplinary study currently in an explosive phase of expansion.

Unknown a generation ago in the English-speaking world, this new kind of history has developed its own learned associations, conferences, yearbooks, and journals, its own classic texts and its own learned debates. Scholars from many disciplines have begun to write new histories of the word. Peter Stallybrass has taught us to see the history of writing from a radically new point of view. Helen Jackson has deciphered the crabbed but indispensable evidence preserved in the margins of dozens of books marked up by readers—and thus shown the interest of the scrawlings that nineteenth-century booksellers tried to eliminate by washing annotated books chemically. Well-informed dealers and learned librarians throughout America and Europe have begun to marshal their holdings in the terms of this new history as well as in the more traditional ones of connoisseurship and bibliography. The field is clearly hot—even in the coolly intellectual world of elite universities.

In the spirit of this new field and of this exhibition, let me ask a simple question: what effects did imaginary bees have on the real life of learning in early modern Europe? The mutable

image they provided haunted classrooms, where every student learned from Seneca that “We should follow...the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in.” Seneca grounded this plea for the creative exploitation of multiple sources, naturally, with a well-chosen quotation: “These bees, as our Virgil says, ‘pack close the flowing honey, And swell their cells with nectar sweet.’” Yet as he also taught, extensive borrowing from others, when carried out correctly, meant the transformation, not the reproduction, of the sources used: “we could so blend these several flavors into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.” Macrobius, when he explained to readers of his *Saturnalia* that he had done the same, appropriated Seneca’s image and played with it, without citing his source—thereby offering his more learned readers the thrill of recognizing the exact nature of the practice he recommended.

In the early modern period, one literary technology—itsself ancient—embodied the ideal of the beehive: the notebook, in all its gloriously illegible forms. This was, of course, a classical revival. The humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries knew that the elder Pliny had dictated endless excerpts to his secretaries, who in turn had organized them into 160

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### Notes

1. The essay that follows is an edited transcript of a public address by the author on February 17, 2005 at The Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Pennsylvania, organized by the curators in association with the exhibition.

*commentarii*, which the younger Pliny described as of extraordinary value, and that these practices had underpinned the rich erudition of one of their favorite books, the elder's *Natural History*. More important, they appreciated that great ancients had seen the making of good notes as a form of mental discipline. As Macrobius wrote, "the actual practice of arrangement, accompanied by a kind of mental fermentation, which serves to season the whole, blends the diverse extracts [in a notebook] to make a single flavor." No wonder that Brutus had spent the eve of the decisive battle of Pharsalus excerpting Polybius, or that Augustus had excerpted examples of good behavior from histories and sent them off to those whose conduct needed improvement.

Most exciting of all, they discovered that some of the ancients most like themselves—above all that sharp-witted and ironic polymath Aulus Gellius—had turned the notebook itself into a literary genre. "Whenever I had taken in hand any Greek or Latin book," he noted in his prologue, "I used to jot down whatever took my fancy, of any and every kind, without any different plan or order, and such notes I would lay away as an aid to my memory, like a kind of literary storehouse." Gellius's completed *commentarii*, he claimed, followed the random order of the original notes he drew them from. By the end of the 1420s, when Nicholas of Cusa excitedly announced that he had discovered a complete text of the *Attic Nights*, he noted with special interest that this preface—which had circulated in the Middle Ages at the end of book 20—came at the beginning of the work. Guarino of Verona, the great teacher of the Este court in Ferrara, emended the text and put it into wider circulation. And he also revived the Gellian ideal as part of the core of modern classical education.

Guarino instructed his star pupil, Leonello d'Este, that whenever he read, he should "have

ready a notebook...in which you can write down whatever you choose and list the materials you have assembled. Then, when you decide to revise the passages that struck you, you will not have to leaf through a large number of pages. For the notebook will be at hand like a diligent and attentive servant to provide what you need." He also noted that he built on ancient precedent here: "The ancient teachers and students considered this practice so important that many of them, including the elder Pliny, reportedly never read a book without taking notes on its more interesting contents."

And in fact, the notebook answered a new and heartfelt need. The humanist scholar had to master the classics well enough to reproduce their style with satisfying consistency and accuracy. If he failed, after all, he risked the sort of humiliation that befell Poggio Bracciolini, when Lorenzo Valla wrote a dialogue in which Guarino's cook and stable boy—themselves barbarous Germans—read one of his works aloud and dissected its solecisms, one by one. The modern humanist had, ideally, to read, digest and make into his own flesh and blood the texts of the ancients, to become a living library, like Peter Kien, the hero of Elias Canetti's terrifying novel *Die Brandung*. More than one achieved this goal—as Justus Lipsius, a master of the notebook method, showed that he had when he offered to recite the text of Tacitus, from start to finish, with a dagger held to his throat, to be plunged in if he made a mistake. Only system, method and hundreds of pages of notes could enable ordinary mortals to become memory artists on this level.

By the sixteenth century, note taking had become part of the educational routine, and textbooks incorporated detailed protocols for it. The intellectual basis for the art was well established. Everyone knew that, as Aristotle and Cicero had explained, any given subject

could be divided into what were imagined, literally, as “common places”—the headings where the topics and arguments proper to it could be found. Rudolf Agricola devoted an influential little book to summarizing the “places” or “heads” of argument. A generation later, what most of the ancients had envisaged as mental preparation for public oratory, techniques for writing invaluable materials and formulating powerful arguments on the wax tablets of an individual’s memory, had transformed itself into a spatially oriented form of information storage and retrieval.

Erasmus gave the idea of the commonplace book its final, decisive shape in his widely read and revealing titled manual *On copiousness in words and ideas*. There he explained that the commonplaces of argument included not only categories, but also *sententiae*—a category that he soon expanded to include not only general statements, but also historical examples and apologies and much else. The collecting of quotations now had a firm logical justification. In Erasmus’s hands, it also took on an epic scale: “Anyone who wants to read through all types of authors (for once in a lifetime all literature must be read by anyone who wishes to be considered learned) will collect as many quotations as possible for himself.” The student, he explained, should devise a complex, all-inclusive set of headings and sub-headings, under which he could enter his extracts:

Then, after having chosen yourself headings, as many as will be adequate, arrange these in the order you want, then add to each its parts, then under these subheadings you will at once note the *loci communes* or *sententiae*, whatever you meet with in any author and particularly in the better ones: *exemplum, casus novus, sententia*, joke or marvel, proverb, metaphor or parable. This method will

have the result of fixing in your mind what you read, and will accustom you to use the wealth of your reading. For there are some people who keep many things as if they were laid up for use, but when they come to speak or write they are remarkably poverty-stricken and bare. And in this way you will have, whenever occasion demands, a whole apparatus for speaking, ready pigeon-holed, from which you can draw.

The commonplace book, like a field well plowed, sown and manured, guaranteed high returns for its owner, and promised that no seed would go to waste.

These precepts were anything but dead letters: schoolmasters systematically put them into practice. At Rivington School, the sixteenth-century statutes instructed the masters that “the eldest sort must be taught how to refer every thing they read to some common place, as to virtue, vice, learning, patience, adversity, prosperity, war, peace &c. for which purpose they must have paper books ready to write them in.” At Eton College, even less was left to chance. Every Saturday afternoon, the boys had to “Show their books for Phrases collected that weeke, and their writing bookes.” Naturally, not all learned men succeeded in disciplining themselves to write down everything they read. But those who failed to do so recognized that they were at fault. The influential Strasbourg rhetorician Johannes Sturm told his students mournfully that “I haven’t done this, and I am sorry that I didn’t do it, and I wish my teachers had told me to do so. I could be more helpful to you now than I am.” Similarly, the great Huguenot philologist Isaac Casaubon—who not only filled the margins of his copy of the *Hermetic Corpus*, now in London, and many other books with comments that look like the scratchings of a mad hen, but also developed many of these into longer essays in the sixty

volumes of his notebooks now preserved in the Bodleian Library—regretted that “I read many things in my own library, which I did not copy out into my *adversaria*”—a technical term, in this case, for the more elaborate sort of notebooks that contained not only excerpts from texts, but analyses of them.

The form of reading that one mastered at school, in other words, was different from reading as we know it now: it was reading as cross-pollination, a rigorous and demanding exercise. One learned to carry it out in conditions of strenuous attentiveness. One practiced it, ideally, in conditions of quiet and isolation. Above all, one did it pen in hand, marking the apposite passages in one’s books and copying them out systematically for rapid retrieval. When Jan Amos Comenius, the 17th century Czech educational reformer, showed schoolboys an image of a reader at work in his study, he naturally incorporated the act of writing into the picture and its accompanying text: “The Study is a place,” he wrote, “where a student, apart from men, sitteth alone, addicted to his studies, whilst he readeth Books, which being within his reach, he layeth open upon a Desk and picketh all the best things out of them into his own Manual, or marketh them in them with a dash, or a little star in the Margent.” The reader sat forward, his fierce attention to the book before him materially embodied in the sharpened quill or bent nib with which he took down everything that mattered most.

Naturally, scholars devised text retrieval schemes of the most wildly varied kinds. Celio Calcagnini, a Ferrarese scholar dear to Erasmus for his belief in church reform and delightfully cryptic epigrams, declined to emulate his friend Pandolfo Colenuccio, who used color-coded inks to identify the subjects of the passages he underlined. Nor did he find it necessary, as he explained, to draw “little towers, pointing hands, or tiny columns” in the margins of his

books, in order to call attention to points of interest. Instead, he summarized, in separate notebooks or in the margins of the pages, a practice which enabled him to review many entire books in half an hour. His copy of Dioscorides in Latin, recently acquired by the Princeton University Library, confirms this description: Calcagnini filled it, end to end, with neatly written notes of many kinds. His energy and ability to find what was salient failed him, he confessed, only once, when he tried to make notes on the elder Pliny’s *Natural History*, that great rag and bone shop of ancient art, technology and science which was itself, as everyone knew, the precipitate of its author’s brilliantly systematic note-taking. As Calcagnini put it, “without question, I did something absurd, since I ended up copying out all of Pliny.”

Others offered mechanical devices to make it easier to lay out and retrieve what one read. Late in the sixteenth century John Foxe the martyrologist produced a printed model commonplace book, topics already laid out with spaces for the reader to fill in. A hundred years later, Vincentius Placcius offered the public a “*Scrinium literatum*,” a device first conceived by the British projector William Harrison, as Noel Malcolm has now shown. This organized the reader’s notes, taken not in books but on a system of file cards or slips, on metal hooks in a cabinet where they were almost mechanically retrievable and could be rearranged and supplemented *ad infinitum*.

Even Placcius did not match the imagination or ambition of the Venetian Giulio Camillo. Camillo—as a friend of Erasmus’s, Viglius Zuichemus, reported with astonishment—built a wooden amphitheatre, large enough for at least two people to enter it and “marked with many images and full of little boxes.” The seven planetary Gods of Olympus and the myths associated with them divided the rows of the theatre into an allegorical encyclopedia in which

every subject matter, or locus, could be immediately found. At each point, the user—who would occupy the space normally allotted to the stage—could find “a mass of papers” which contained “whatever about anything is found in Cicero.” The user would thus be able not only to comprehend the universe, but also—a far more saleable accomplishment in period terms—to talk about his findings in perfect Latin prose. “Whoever is admitted as spectator,” Zuichemus remarked, “will be able to discourse on any subject no less fluently than Cicero”—though Camillo himself, it turned out, “stammers and speaks Latin with difficulty, excusing himself with the pretext that through continually using his pen he has nearly lost the use of speech.” In Camillo’s hands, the commonplace book bloomed like a vast mad orchid, becoming a 3-dimensional model of the human mind itself. No wonder that the proper way to make and fill such books continued to occupy serious thinkers until the Enlightenment, when Locke dedicated a treatise to the subject, or that so many of the most prominent early modern writers—Montaigne and Donne, Jonson and Milton, Voltaire and Jefferson—produced them.

In the world of learning, however, the routines of commonplacing had effects—and underwent transformations—that could not easily have been predicted from their original role in elementary education. In theory, commonplace books were private and individual. Each one should contain the precipitate of a single person’s systematic reading, should represent a hermeneutical autobiography. In practice, the distance between private and public rapidly disappeared, as printed aids to composition appeared that had many of the characteristics and uses of the commonplace book. Erasmus insisted that each student must read his own way through the classics and make his own collections of turns of phrase and historical examples. But the very work in which he explained how to make notebooks, *On Copiousness*, offered sprawling lists of examples which readers could plunder as they wished: more than a

hundred ways to say “Thank you for the letter” in good Latin, for example, and dozens more for saying “So long as I live, I shall remember you.” His *Adages*, which appeared in 1508, offered potted essays on thousands of subjects, each inspired by a pithy and quotable ancient saying.

These books became bestsellers, on a pan-European scale; just about half of the books found in the libraries of students who died while at Cambridge (as many did in the sixteenth century) were textbooks by Erasmus. And they informed anyone who could read a bit of Latin that when he wished to advise that peace was preferable to war, he should say “War is pleasant, to those who haven’t tried it,” and that when he wanted to point out that attacking a powerful antagonist was unwise, he should say “Don’t poke the fire with a sword,” and that when he wanted to counsel against precipitate decisions, he should simply quote the emperor Vespasian: “Hasten slowly.” Multiple systematic indexes—another practice learned from ancient literary bees like Pliny and Gellius—made the riches of these works easily accessible, despite their deliberately unsystematic form.

Other textbook authors, less idealistic than Erasmus, assembled similar materials more systematically. Henricus Arning, for example, compiled a work entitled “Marrow of the Transitions Most Used in Orations” for Gymnasium students in Livonia. It offered not guidance in wandering the endless Hercynian forests of Latin literature but model exordia, transitions, and conclusions, in which the student could fill in the blanks as any occasion demanded: “Though our ancestors ordained many splendid things, none of these was more splendid, more useful, more prudent, more carefully adapted to preserve scholarship, more efficiently designed to promote the studiousness of the young, more brilliantly appropriate to preserving

the authority of ranks and orders, than \_\_\_\_\_." Theodor Zwinger provided intending scholars with excerpts from over 500 authors, laid out to form a *Theatre of Human Life* more than 5,000 folio pages long. More and more sophisticated indices made it unnecessary even to read such works through. The commonplace book, in short, not only served as an educational tool, but also became a published genre in its own right—one that occasionally threatened to become the early modern counterpart to such websites as Schoolsucks.com.

The pervasiveness of such compilations—and the universal expectation that good students would produce more of them—had a powerful impact on habits of reading and argument. Any regime of commentary tends to atomize texts, to break them up into little units that can be coherently discussed. But the commonplace method heightened this tendency. It schooled even readers of the highest originality to think of the works they read not as coherent wholes, but as quarries, from which the modern reader could assemble any sort of mosaic. No wonder, then, that so many early modern texts pullulate with facts, examples, quotations and anecdotes pulled from their contexts, misrepresented as personal experience and misapplied to the most diverse ends. After all, any given writer compiled his work, over time, often from his own notebooks, the composition of which lay years in the past, or the compilations of other men entirely.

Did not contemporaries realize that commonplacing was, itself, a commonplace, that accessible printed substitutes enabled ethically challenged writers to dispense with taking their own notes, and simply mix and match existing ingredients? Of course they did. From the fifteenth century on, in fact, those who revealed their dependence on notebooks found themselves challenged, confounded and humiliated. Angelo Decembrio, the Milanese

humanist whose *De politia litteraria*, a set of dialogues modeled on the *Attic Nights*, described the literary world of Guarino's Ferrara, brought an old schoolmaster on stage who had used notebooks to master all of Virgil. He challenged all comers to cite any line from Virgil's corpus, and promised that he would reply with the next one. "Vrbem," intoned the young poet Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, "quam dicunt Romam, Meliboeae, putavi"—and forced the schoolmaster to reply "Stultus ego." But he, of course, had already become senile—the natural fate, as Decembrio remarked, of those who spent too much time with the young.

Erasmus attacked more glamorous prey. He devoted the opening pages of his satire on the Ciceronians—the Italians who tried to write a prose in which every word, phrase and fact came from the corpus of Cicero—to an imaginative account of how one of them had ruined his health in his obsession to capture the textual world of Cicero on paper. The Ciceronian Nosoponus declares that he has compiled three great notebooks: an alphabetical list of every word in Cicero, so large that two men can barely lift it; an alphabetical list of every phrase in Cicero, even larger than the first; and a list of all the metrical feet that occur at the beginnings and ends of Cicero's sentences. He documents Cicero's usage by compiling not just every word, but every appearance of it, making careful distinctions between the different senses it had in different contexts. He refuses to use not just any word which Cicero had not, but any form of it which did not figure in the Ciceronian corpus. And he prepares to use these materials by eating only 10 currants and 3 coriander seeds coated with sugar for dinner, immuring himself "in a library in the inmost part of my house with thick walls, double doors and windows, and all the cracks stopped carefully with pitch and plaster so that by day scarcely a ray of light can break through or a sound"—and spending the whole night on a single sentence. He even prepares for Latin meditation in the same way.

Boulephorus, his antagonist, makes fun of Nosoponus in many ways, remarking that “if I should prepare to work on Cicero to that extent at night my wife would burst open the door, would tear the books, and would burn the pages that are absorbed in Cicero. And what is even more intolerable, while I was working on Cicero, she would find another lover.” But his chief point is more elegant. The ancient painter Zeuxis, he points out, had to paint a picture of Helen for the citizens of Croton. To make it “a perfect and lifelike example of womanly charm,” he did not use a single model, “but from all who offered themselves to him he chose several who were more excellent than the rest in order that he might select from each what was most comely.” Did this not suggest that seeking a model of eloquence from Cicero alone was misguided? No, replied Nosoponus: “If Zeuxis had found a virgin of such beauty as Cicero, perhaps he would have been content with a single model.” His statement, of course, condemned him. For it showed that for all his mastery of Cicero’s vocabulary, he had failed to see that Cicero himself was an eclectic stylist, who recommended in his treatise *On Invention* that orators emulate Zeuxis. The master of the notebook method revealed that his command of the texts was actually lifeless, that he had not understood them fully and could not read them in a productive way. Worse still, he failed to understand that the world had changed since Cicero’s time—something that Cicero himself clearly had understood when he made his productive adaptations from Greek originals. Richard West made the same point more pithily in 1638:

Their Braines lye all in Notes; Lord! How they’d looke  
If they should chance to loose their Table-book!

Yet Erasmus himself was liable to the same criticism—as Mutianus Rufus, a German friend of his, pointed out, when he remarked that Erasmus’s *Aphorisms* had been over-praised: they

were only a device that enabled ignorant schoolboys to pretend they were learned.

What made a great scholars’ notebooks different from those of an ordinary product of Latin school was, first of all, their sheer extent—and the first-hand way in which he had compiled them. Guillaume Budé, the great French lawyer and contemporary of Erasmus who inspired the creation of what became the Collège de France, mastered the entire corpus of Greek by his own efforts. And he did so with notebooks—notebooks on a heroic, Herculean scale. Seven of these survive, in private hands in Geneva. Closely written, two thousands pages long, these fragments of what must originally have been an immense literary honeycomb confirm that Budé worked just as hard as academic legend says (when a servant entered his study to tell him that his wife thought he should know the house was on fire, he replied, “Kindly remind Mme Budé that domestic affairs are her concern” and went on working). They also show that he took the enterprise of notebook-keeping with deep seriousness. Text after text, word after word is not only copied out, but analyzed, in terms of its potential application. And the content of these entries is as revealing as their form, as a single sample shows. Budé’s notebooks clearly formed an integral part of his lifelong effort to create a Christian form of humanism. Even as he read his texts, he imagined their application, not randomly but purposefully—and thus made possible the composition of his great treatise *On the Passage from Paganism to Christianity*.

In hands like Budé’s, commonplaceness became a creative art—a way to make the classics useful for modern purposes. No one emulated his practices more effectively than Justus Lipsius, the liar, heretic and plagiarist who also became a master teacher of everything from military tactics to Stoic philosophy—not to mention the many connections between them. In

1589, he issued his *Politica*, a manual of politics in six books that would go through fifteen editions in Latin between 1589 and 1599 alone (eventually it went through 54 of them) and was translated into Dutch, French, English, Polish, Spanish, Hungarian, and other languages. Even the most professional politician—like the hard-bitten Spanish cavalryman Bernardino de Mendoza—might take time off between efforts to assassinate Queen Elizabeth in order to translate the text (in his case, into Spanish). No wonder, for Lipsius made his work a systematic training in all the skills that early modern monarchs and their ministers needed: how to raise armies, quell dissent, impose discipline, trick an enemy (licitly or illicitly), and deal with religious dissenters. In each case, Lipsius made his points not by proposing arguments of his own but by setting out mosaics of quotations from authoritative texts—in such a way as to mix traditional ingredients into an up-to-date, even ultra-modern creation.

Should a state, he asked, tolerate religious dissent? To begin with, he explained, one must distinguish between public and private dissent. Then one can lay out the opinions of the ancients in a coherent and useful way:

I say that they sin publicly, who both entertain wrong opinions about God and the traditional rites and induce others to do so by making disturbances. Privately, who entertain the same wrong opinions, but keep them to themselves. As to the first, the question is, should such men get off scot free? No! 'Let them be punished by you lest you be punished in their place!' (Cyprian)  
Especially if they create disturbances. 'Better that one perish than that unity perish.' (Augustine)

'The penalty for profanation of religions varies from place to place, but there always is one.' (Seneca)

There is no room for clemency here. 'Burn, cut, so that a member perish rather than the whole body.' (Cicero)

When challenged—as Lipsius was by the Dutch irenicist Dirck Coornhert, who objected to this apparently fierce demand that heretics be beheaded and burnt—he replied, calmly, that his opponents, even if already old men, needed to go back to school. They had failed to see that his texts did not mean what they seemed to. The phrase “burn and cut” merely recommended a necessary form of surgery—as was clear from the original context in which Cicero had used the phrase in his *Philippics*. Lipsius’s dazzlingly clever version of the commonplace book—a model demonstration of both how one could pull texts from their contexts to serve new purposes, and claim to be merely carrying out a harmless, erudite form of compilation when challenged—attracted the interest of some of the most learned and original writers in Europe. Ben Jonson underlined his own copy of the *Politica* to death, and recycled material from it in a curious work of his own, *Timber, or Discoveries*, which also resembled a commonplace book given finished form—the book as honeycomb.

No case reveals the miseries and splendors of the notebook method more vividly than that of Flacius Illyricus, the south Slav who created a research team in Magdeburg, which in turn compiled the first Protestant church history. This immense enterprise—the first grant-supported effort at historical teamwork since ancient times—employed no fewer than “seven students,” as Flacius explained, “endowed with reasonable learning and judgment, with fixed grants. They carefully go through the authors assigned to them and make excerpts from them,

paying close attention to the goals established with great care in our Method. They carry out what amounts to an anatomy of the authors, and copy everything out in its place [that is, its commonplace], and do so always taking up one century at a time." A passionate Protestant and, as this last passage shows, an observer of the new science practiced by Vesalius, Flacius was also a traditional humanist, and made clear his own allegiance to the standard fable of the bees:

"Next we support two Masters of Arts, men of outstanding maturity, learning and good judgement. They are presented with the materials that the hard-working little bees have already collected from flowers in various places. Their job is to assess, outline and arrange the materials that have already been assembled, which should form part of the text, and finally to work them up into a coherent historical narrative."

The resulting text—a century by century history of the church—was organized not as a linear narrative but as a honeycomb, each hole in which held information about church doctrine, liturgy, or poor relief at a given time—an extraordinarily original form of historical writing.

But Flacius' project—and the metaphors that he gaily flung into one basket as he described it to potential donors—did not meet with universal enthusiasm. In Wittenberg, for example, the followers of Melancthon, who despised him, seized upon the new and unbecoming metaphor of a public anatomy. "Flacius' anatomies of historical book," the Wittenbergers cracked, "are well known, and much resented by those whose libraries have experienced them"—an allusion to the fabled *culter Flacianus*, or *Flacian razor*, which Flacius supposedly used to

gather his materials. Worse still, by bringing into play the corporeal metaphor of the bees, Flacius and his allies unleashed the scatological imaginations of their opponents—never something in short supply in the German professoriate. The Wittenberg critics used an elaborate organic metaphor against the Institutum. The seven inspectors, they joked, formed the belly of the beast. The inspectors, like the liver, separated chyme from blood, and sent the excrementary byproducts along to the masters of arts, as if to the intestines. As to Flacius and the other inspectors—they must either be the brain or the heart of the enterprise: "Since Flacius is nothing in history, except the impresario of the money, we can more fittingly compare him to the heart. But clearly, if your heart is a great ass, it isn't very heartening to have it." The College's elaborate table of organization, then, was nothing more than an adaptation of the human anatomy and physiology that its members had probably seen demonstrated for them on a chart. Like a human body, too, the College in the end produced nothing but excrement.

The literary honeycomb had a double edge—as Flacius, who liked mixing his metaphors, might well have remarked. In the later as in the early Renaissance: a Wittenberg man could flagellate a colleague in Magdeburg for thinking commonplaces a panacea for historical research. Nonetheless, the notebook played many vital roles in the practice of scholars' daily lives and learned work. It was not just a teaching aid for aspiring Latinists, but a hermeneutical tool and a locus of research training in its own right. Its current decay—the signs of which are everywhere evident, and made manifest in this clever exhibition—marks part of the immense distance that separates us from our literary ancestors in the republic of letters.

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**Exhibition Documents**

## The Revolt of the Bees

Thaddeus Squire and Aaron Levy

*The Revolt of the Bees, Wherein the Future of the Paper Hive is Declared* is an exhibition that proposes a new culture of memory and archiving in the true spirit of the beehive.<sup>1</sup> It takes as its starting point the assumption that modern memory is first of all archival, and that the beehive and the paper hive (an archive or library) both fancy themselves utopias in which modern memory is stored up, as honey or as knowledge.

The exhibition is comprised of eleven lessons extracted from a larger examination of beehive metaphors in the rare book and manuscript collections of the University of Pennsylvania. These lessons envision the archive of the future as an organization open to the infinite possibilities of its own becoming—an organization that is comfortable with its status as a living organism as well as with its own ultimate fragility and finitude.

Nearly 100 years after Marinetti's polemical first Futurist manifesto questioned the cultural establishment of its time through incendiary aggressiveness, we are once again compelled to explore the horizon of cultural transformation. In the style of the Futurists, this exhibition builds upon the premise that the organization is not only a determinant of contemporary cultural practice, but is the embodiment of cultural practice as well—a form of art in itself. Unlike the Futurists, who presupposed that radical change necessitates destructive procedures, *The Revolt of the Bees* translates the incendiary desires and "charred fingers" of the Futurists into a purely conceptual framework and extreme metaphor of transformation as a way of rethinking our cultural obsession with permanence in all its forms.

This exhibition takes as its emblematic image a photograph from 1977 of Joseph Beuys alongside his *Honey Pump in the Workplace*. This remarkable machine, constructed by the artist in the Fridericianum in Kassel, Germany for Documenta 6, pumped nearly 300 pounds of honey through a network of pipes traversing the exhibition building. As is the case with many of the rare books displayed in this exhibition, Beuys' project is a microcosmic metaphor for a utopian social system in which members of a well-ordered cooperative work together to cultivate, cleanse and restore life and society through the production and dissemination of honey and knowledge. "The blood that circulates in the body," Beuys argued, "does the same work that the bee does in the bee-hive." "The person," he similarly claimed, "is practically a swarm of bees as well, a bee-hive in fact."



Image: Joseph Beuys, *Honey pump in the workplace* (1977).

As French sociologist Pierre Nora warns, "The indiscriminate filling of archives is [...] the clearest expression yet of the 'terroristic' effect of historicized memory." One of the ways in which we may resist this terrorizing effect is through discriminate archival practices, which entails both the positive destruction of some 'memory' and the perpetual reorganization of the rest, thus elevating the curator to a new and central social role. Curatorial practices such as this exhibition—like Beuys' own artistic practice—emerge from and contribute to alternative social formations. This exhibition explores theories of curatorial innovation and approaches curatorial practice as an evolving and future-oriented field, prompting questions such as how one might renew or reinvent an archival collection by constructing a new genealogy around a historical concept, and to whom or what the curator is ultimately responsible.

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### Notes

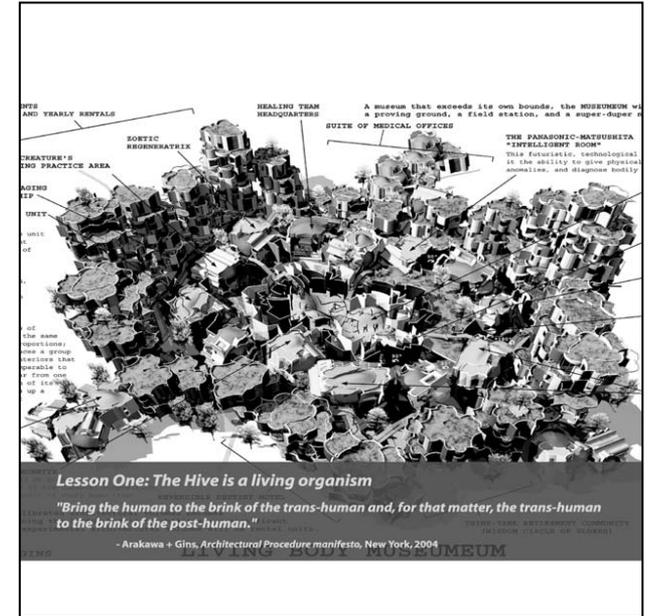
1. This text and those that follow appeared as vitrine texts in *The Revolt of the Bees*, an exhibition at The Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Pennsylvania, on display January-March, 2005.

## Vitrine 1: The Hive is a living organism

***"Bring the human to the brink of the trans-human and, for that matter, the trans-human to the brink of the post-human."*** — Arakawa + Gins, *Architectural Procedure*, New York, 2004

The hive is a living organism, and the living organism is a metaphor for the American organization, which is both the embodiment of and emblem for contemporary cultural practice. Every hive is constituted of thousands of bees: small organisms of finite lifespan subject to an inexorable cycle of life and death. The hive as a whole, however, provides an architecture for overcoming death by possessing a different sustainability—one wrought through continuous cycles of generational passing and reemergence, for which death is not a consideration. Extending the metaphor of the hive into the cultural realm suggests new and more hopeful visions of the cultural organization. Historically, cultural organizations have been founded, built and sustained under covert and overt custodial pretenses. These pretenses foster an inexorable desire to artificially sustain practices beyond their useful lives, denying their fragility and ephemerality. Can we imagine our organizations operating without consideration or fear of fragility and sustainability as they envision their futures? And can we imagine our organizations as models for social organization that are constantly evolving and regenerating?

For over three decades, artists-architects-poets Arakawa (b. 1936) and Madeline Gins (b. 1941) have worked in collaboration to design and construct works of procedural architecture that transcend concerns about fragility and finitude, and redefine our understanding of the human body as fundamentally mortal. "Underlying all cultures," they argue, "in East and West alike, is this assumption or attitudinal stance: we—each and every one of us—must die." Arakawa and Gins have diagnosed a defeatism coursing through all art and science that has resulted in a "muted life for fear of a terrifying death." To overcome this defeatism, they have reconfigured the foundations of what makes us "human" through a fundamental rearrangement of knowledge. In the style of the historic avant-garde, they argue that human flourishing and the "good life" necessitates the activation of alternative social structures and the elusion of death; their work serves as "an open challenge to our species to reinvent itself and to desist from foreclosing on any possibility."



Vitrine Backdrop: Arakawa + Gins, *Living Body Museum* (see below).

Publication on display from the Slought Foundation Library:

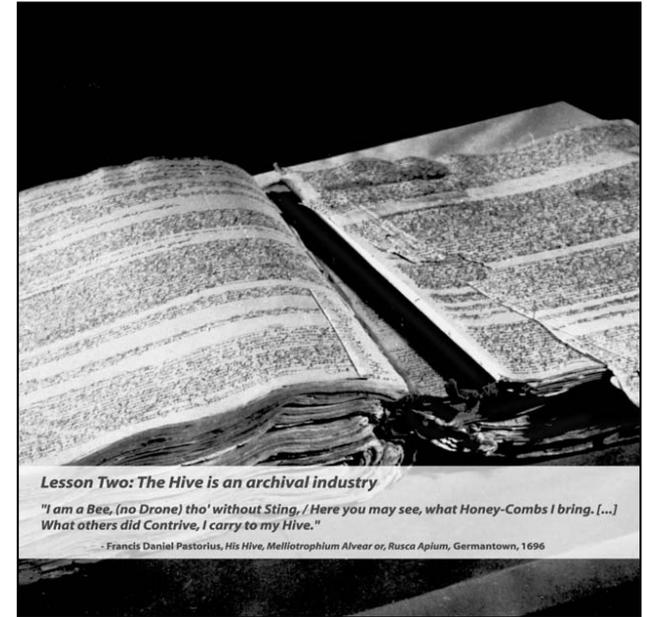
Arakawa + Gins, *Living Body Museum, A Project Concept and Business Plan [...] To Alan Gerson, New York City Council Member* (New York, 2003).

## Vitrine 2: The Hive is an archival industry

**"I am a Bee, (no Drone) tho' without Sting, / Here you may see, what Honey-Combs I bring. [...] What others did Contrive, I carry to my Hive."** — Daniel Pastorius, *His Hive, Mellitrophium Alvear or, Rusca Apium, Germantown, 1696-1865*

The idea of the archive permeates the human experience, through our seemingly indomitable will to collect, organize, interpret and preserve the knowledge and artifacts of the world around us. From the building of libraries, to the history of writing and publication—from the monograph to the encyclopedic—to the development of the Internet and electronic database technologies, we have endeavored to build ever more complex and comprehensive records of the human experience. This drive is also reflected in our will to organize and "collect" ourselves and our societies in ever-changing and shifting configurations and repositories.

The Pennsylvania colonist and polymath, Francis Daniel Pastorius (1651-1719/20), is widely known as the founding father of Germantown, Philadelphia. Among his many projects was the inter-generational book *The Bee-Hive*, a compilation of commonplace knowledge and verse miscellany, and a smaller companion, *Alvearialia*. Legal scholar Marianne Wokeck has described Pastorius' extraordinary and obsessive creation as an "early American encyclopedia of knowledge." Cultural historian Patrick Erben notes that for Pastorius "...the process of collecting and composing simultaneously engages the experiential and concrete world outside the text, the intellectual world of his reading and writing, and, finally, the physical compilation and representation of his knowledge on the pages of his manuscript books. [...] By highlighting the parallelism between the material and mental processes of collecting and selecting materials, Pastorius illustrates the participatory and continuous nature of both the production of the text and the construction of the community. His title pages present each manuscript volume not as a static, finished text, but as a tangible and dynamic compilation of entries, which invites readers to join in the project of intellectual, cultural, and material ordering." Against the frequent analogy of the museum as mausoleum and columbarium for the storage and preservation of cultural artifact, Pastorius' *The Bee-Hive* implies a dynamic and perpetually changing model for archival practice. Today, when new forms of electronic media allow us to infinitely project the archive (as database) into the future, Pastorius' finite compilation, as a temporal commonplace book and an unfinished accumulation of knowledge, reminds us of the transient dynamics of archival industry.



Vitrine Backdrop: Daniel Pastorius, *His Hive*... (see below).

### Publication on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

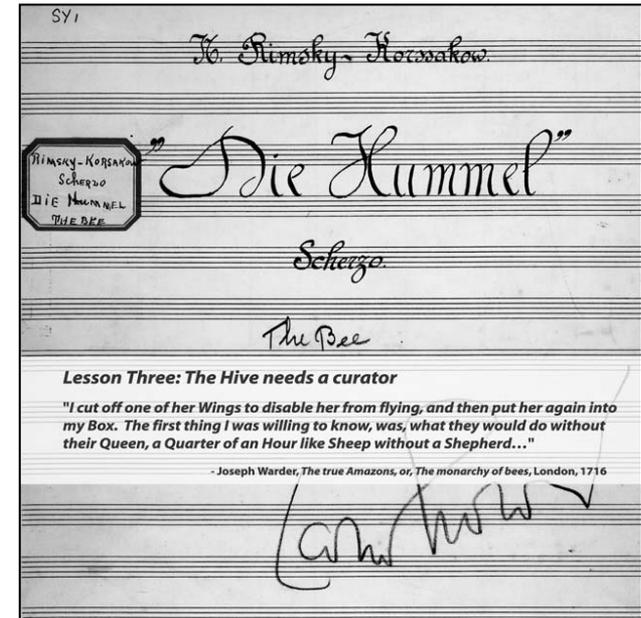
Daniel Pastorius, *His Hive, Mellitrophium Alvear or, Rusca Apium, Begun Anno Do[m]ini or, in the year of Christian Account 1696* (Germantown, 1696-1865). Two volumes.

### Vitrine 3: The Hive needs a curator

**"I cut off one of her Wings to disable her from flying, and then put her again into my Box. The first thing I was willing to know, was, what they would do without their Queen, a Quarter of an Hour like Sheep without a Shepherd..."** — Joseph Warder, *The true Amazons, or, The monarchy of bees*, London, 1716

In Joseph Warder's *The true Amazons, or, The monarchy of bees* (London, 1716), the author conducts a series of perverse experiments designed to satisfy his curiosity about the dependency of the hive upon the queen. Among these, he finds that in taking away the queen-bee, "my poor Bees fell again to spreading themselves in search of her." His experiment casts the society of bees as a reflection of the wisdom and "lovely Order" of the English monarchic society, in which it is divinely given that loyal subjects need their Queen. Warder's experiments also testify to the value of accumulating knowledge through processes of experimentation.

In contrast to the archive as a site of indiscriminate archiving and perpetual accumulation of artifact, Warder's experiments imply the need for an authoritative ordering and life-giving force—namely, the modern curator as queen bee. To ask the question, as this exhibition repeatedly does, "What should curatorial practice look like today?" is to ask a fundamentally taxonomic question. As a preeminent site for the creation and contestation of meaning, the contemporary archive lies continually beyond the bounds of any given taxonomy, requiring that new classificatory systems be perpetually created and destroyed with each encounter. It immediately distinguishes the curatorial endeavor as an intervention on the level of the archive, as opposed to the traditional notion of the curator as expositor of archival content or national heritage. This new interventionist role for the contemporary curator, however, redefines traditional notions of archival integrity and non-invasive stewardship and places the curator in a new more critical position within society, embracing responsibility for far more than mere preservation and interpretation.



Vitrine Backdrop: Rimsky-Korsakov, *Die Hummel* with Stokowski signature (see below).

#### Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

Joseph Warder, *The true Amazons, or, The monarchy of bees : being a new discovery and improvement of those wonderful creatures ... : also how to make the English wine or mead, equal, if not superior to the best of other wines* (London, 1716).

Recipe book (Montreal, 1871-1875).

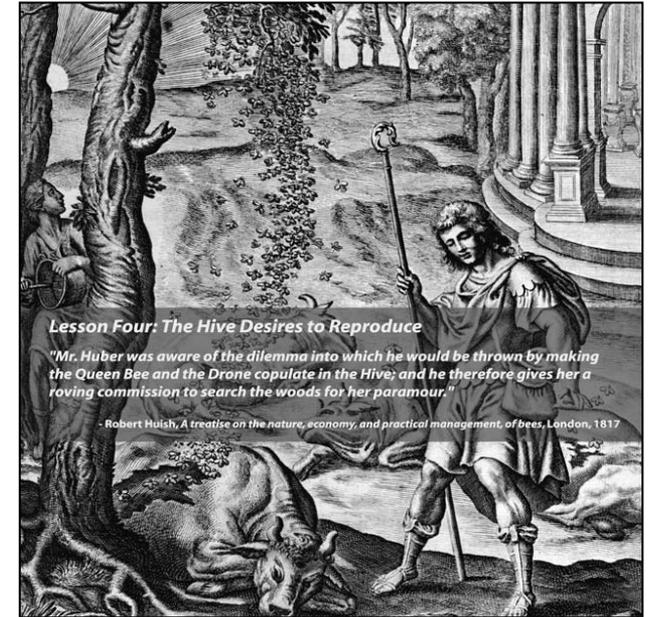
Rimsky-Korsakov, *Die Hummel (The Bee; Flight of the Bumblebee)*, Stokowski Collection (Philadelphia, 1882-1977).

#### Vitrine 4: The Hive desires to reproduce

**"Mr. Huber was aware of the dilemma into which he would be thrown by making the Queen Bee and the Drone copulate in the Hive; and he therefore gives her a roving commission to search the woods for her paramour."** — Robert Huish, *A treatise on the nature, economy, and practical management, of bees*, London, 1817

"In regard to the Work now offered to the Public," Robert Huish explains in his *A treatise on the nature, economy, and practical management, of bees* (London, 1817), "my aim has been...to render this Country independent of all foreign supply of the Produce of the Bee." Huish acknowledges the biological imperative of bees to sustain their species and, by extension, the agricultural imperative of apiarian practices to the sustenance of the nation-state. Common bee-keeping practice at the time mandated killing the hive to harvest the honey. This essentially destructive agricultural practice, as well as states of general mismanagement, kept England dependent on imported honey. Huish envisioned that with proper management the productivity of domestic bee stocks could be made sufficient to meet or exceed demand, thus eliminating the dependence of England on foreign economies. "To what is the ruin of the hive to be attributed—to the extreme liability of the Bees to failure," Huish wonders, "or to the ignorance of the proprietor in the mode of management?" Among his many technical and methodological innovations aimed at countering ignorance and improper bee-keeping practices, Huish invented the hive that bears his name, from which honey combs can be extracted without killing the bees or hindering production and reproduction.

Though Huish set out to develop more enlightened and technologically advanced methods for promoting apiculture by mitigating the negative effects of human intervention, his approaches to maximizing productivity remain fundamentally dependent upon positive intervention. Contemporary practices, as exemplified by the archive and the Internet, also tend toward unbridled abundance through processes of multiplication and accumulation, yet nevertheless require a degree of cultivation. The perpetuation of this dynamic process depends on a degree of prudent intervention, wherein carefully gaged barriers, orders and containments are constantly created and destroyed in the interest of sustaining the enterprise as a whole.



Vitrine Backdrop: Virgil, *The works of Virgil: Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis* (London, 1697).

#### Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

Robert Huish, *A treatise on the nature, economy, and practical management, of bees : in which the various systems of the British and foreign apiarians are examined, and the most improved methods laid down for effectually preserving the lives of the bees : containing also an accurate description, illustrated by plates, of the hives invented by Lombard, Ducouedic, Huber, Vicaat, l'abbé della Rocca, and other foreign apiarians, and of a newly invented hive for the purpose of depriving the bees of their honey, with safety and expedition : forming the most complete guide to the study and management of those valuable insects* (London, 1817).

H. C. Hermann, *The Italian Alp-Bee* (London, 1860).

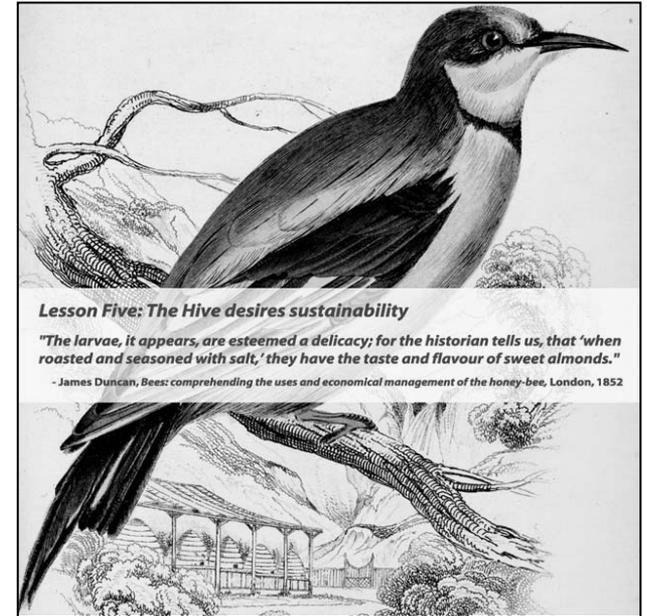
## Vitrine 5: The Hive desires sustainability

**"The larvae, it appears, are esteemed a delicacy; for the historian tells us, that "when roasted and seasoned with salt," they have the taste and flavour of sweet almonds."**

— François Huber in James Duncan, *Bees: comprehending the uses and economical management of the honey-bee*, London, 1852

For François Huber, in memoirs reprinted in James Duncan's *Bees: comprehending the uses and economical management of the honey-bee* (London, 1852), the tireless exploration of new culinary frontiers results in humankind becoming an apivorous or bee-eating threat to the hive. Around the time of Huber's publication, it was still widely accepted that the beekeeper must destroy the hive to harvest the honey and prevent the dreaded idea of Britain being overrun with bees. The success and sustainability of apiculture depended on balancing agricultural production with ongoing destruction of the animal suppliers.

Concerns about sustainability permeate our culture and our landscapes: they can be located in our civilization's obsession with building museums, libraries, archives, and monuments. They can also be located in the institutional impulse to prevent loss and preserve memory through the sheer accumulation of primary material (e.g. the new Library of Alexandria, or the development of the Internet). In this sense, it is arguable that contemporary libraries and museums are predicated on an almost pathological fear of the destruction of knowledge. They mitigate and postpone this threat through the ongoing creation and recreation of cultural memory in the form of heterogeneous archival and discursive practices. Driven by the specter of potential loss, libraries and like institutions engage both in the positive destruction of memory (through rendering judgment on what will not be preserved), and the positive construction of memory (through rendering judgment on what will be preserved). These two positions meet in the conviction that there can be no culture without some memory, and that memory, if not in origin, then in posterity, is a fundamentally shared and collective experience.



Vitrine Backdrop: François Huber, *The Naturalist's Library: Bees* (see below).

**Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:**

François Huber, *The Naturalist's Library: Bees* (London, 1852).

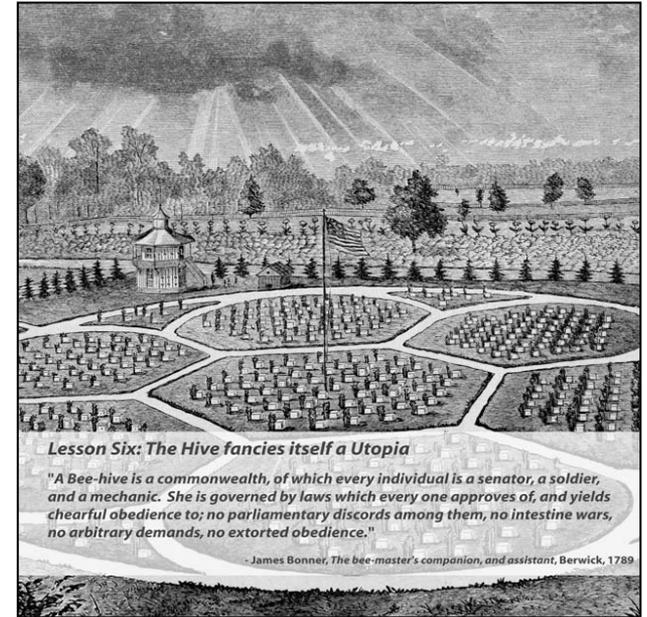
James Duncan, *Bees: comprehending the uses and economical management of the honey-bee of Britain and other countries: together with descriptions of the known wild species* (Edinburgh, 1852).

## Vitrine 6: The Hive fancies itself a utopia

**"A Bee-hive is a commonwealth, of which every individual is a senator, a soldier, and a mechanic. She is governed by laws which every one approves of, and yields cheerful obedience to; no parliamentary discords among them, no intestine wars, no arbitrary demands, no extorted obedience."** — James Bonner, *The bee-master's companion, and assistant*, Berwick, 1789

James Bonner, in *The bee-master's companion, and assistant* (Berwick, 1789), speaks of the hive as an enlightened, utopic society or "commonwealth," in which universally accepted order and law presides, all are comfortable in their respective positions, and wealth and possessions are equitably distributed. "The Bee called the Queen," he writes, "so far as ever I could observe, has no sovereignty over the rest of the Bees. The form of government in a hive seems not to be monarchical, but a democracy..." Like all utopic visions, however, Bonner's democratic inclinations have their limits, such as when Bonner maligns the drone bees when he notes that bees "...are temperate in diet, no gormandizers or drunkards among them (the Drones excepted)..." In subsequent passages, his idealized hive is revealed to be equally subject to factionalization, as is the case with any real democratic society.

Bonner's sociopolitical reading of the hive closely resembles the idealized image of the archive as a kind of universal receptacle for cultural artifact, possessed of an order and hierarchy, but dominated by a democratic ideal that aspires to the preservation and dissemination of all substance and knowledge. His analogy also suggests harmonious agreement over the content and order of artifact among the builders and constituents of the archive. The archive and the cultural organization may appear on the surface to be paragons of order and harmony, with a boundless capacity to preserve, interpret and embrace all cultural memory. Below the surface, however, one confronts the limits of utopia, and the true nature of the archive is found at the center of an ongoing discussion, debate and conflict over the nature, use, and capacity of the "archival commonwealth."



Vitrine Backdrop: A. I. Root, *The ABC of Bee Culture* (see below).

### Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

James Bonner of Edinburgh, *The bee-master's companion, and assistant. Wherein is set forth the properest methods of managing those insects, so as they may turn out to the best advantage. Shewing an effectual way to preserve them from famine, cold, robbers, mice, or other enemies: also how to make all your hives equal in bees, so as never to have any weak hive; with an account of the power the working bees are invested with...* (Berwick, 1789).

Henry Taylor, *The Bee-Keeper's Manual* (London, 1839).

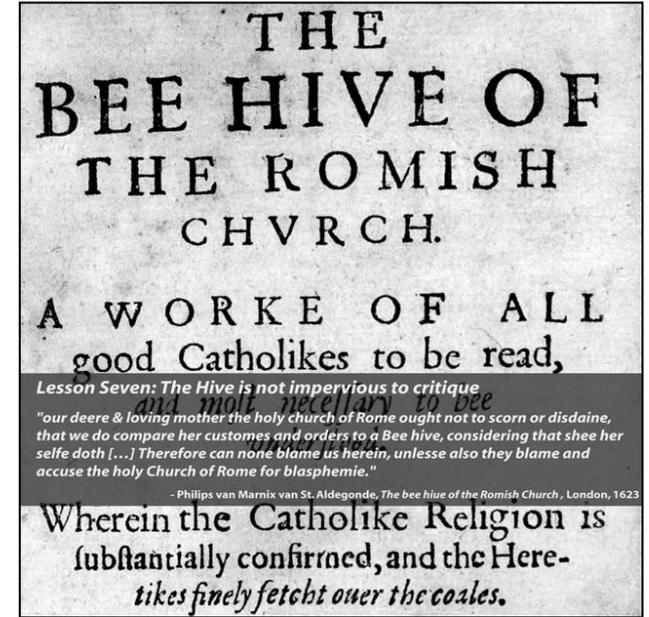
A.I. Root, *The ABC of Bee Culture* (Ohio, 1890).

## Vitrine 7: The Hive is not impervious to critique

*"...our deere & loving mother the holy church of Rome ought not to scorn or disdain, that we do compare her customes and orders to a Bee hive, considering that shee her selfe doth [...] Therefore can none blame us herein, unlesse also they blame and accuse the holy Church of Rome for blasphemie."* — Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde, *The bee hieue of the Romish Church*, London, 1623

*The bee hieue of the Romish Church* by Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde (London, 1623) presents the hive as divinely inspired and a favored metaphor for the Roman Catholic Church. As an example of Counter-Reformation literature, his polemic defends the church against Protestant heresy by establishing the hive as a reflection of divine order and literature—"the holy Scripture, olde Fathers, Councils, Decrees, and Canons, gathered together, and as in a sweet Bee hive." This association establishes a rigorous hermeneutical analogy between the beehive and the church. "[The Holy Roman Church] her selfe doth compare [...] the Virgine Mary unto the Bees," it is argued, "which were in very deede a great blasphemie, if the Bees were not of so great valour and vertue, that by them wee might liken & compare the holy Church of Rome." In so doing, St Aldegonde creates an infallible link between the human and the divine that is impervious to the threat of critique.

The perceived threat of heretical misinterpretation indicates, however, the very potential for critique to permeate the hive. The author presents two threats to the hermeneutic integrity of the Catholic Church. One threat is outwardly heretical readings, as he admonishes his readers, "Play not the part of a Spider, which out of sweet and odoriferous flowres sucketh deadly poison." Another threat is attributed to the potential for poorly substantiated claims and lack of exegetical rigor, as the following passage makes evident: "[...] as the hony Bee, doth not gather her hony out of one flower alone, but of many and diverse: So doth not the church of Rome stand upon one scripture, Bible, councils or bookes of Decrees, but doth catch and snatch out of each of them." Against the line of argumentation of *The Bee Hieue of the Romish Church*, the critical maneuver is a positive reading tool, and is vital to the perpetual construction and ongoing interpretation of our society and its practices.



Vitrine Backdrop: Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde, *The bee hieue of the Romish Church*, London, 1623

Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

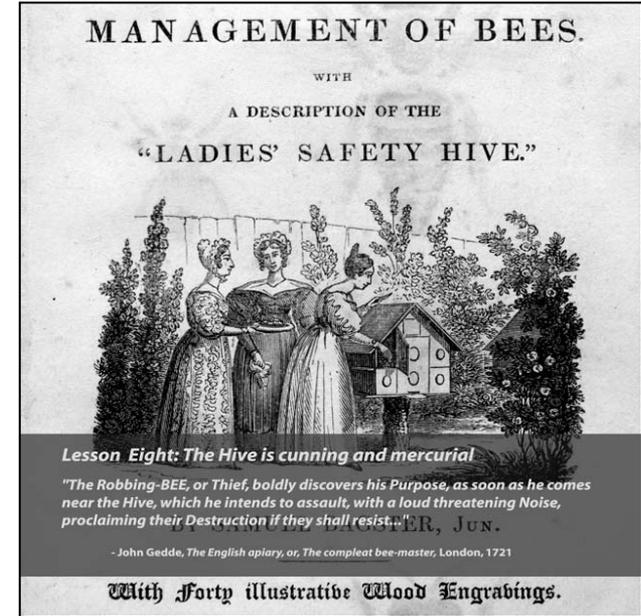
Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde, *The bee hieue of the Romish Church: a worke of all good Catholikes to be read, and most necessary to be understood: wherein the Catholike religion is substantially confirmed, and the heretikes finely fetcht over the coales* (London, 1623).

## Vitrine 8: The Hive is cunning and mercurial

**"The Robbing-BEE, or Thief, boldly discovers his Purpose, as soon as he comes near the Hive, which he intends to assault, with a loud threatening Noise, proclaiming their Destruction if they shall resist..."** — John Gedde, *The English apiary, or, The compleat bee-master*, London, 1721

Among the many threats faced by the hive, John Gedde in his *The English Apiary* (London, 1721), describes the phenomenon of the robber-bee, whose devious assault threatens the integrity and productivity of the hive. Unlike other accounts in his time that call attention to external threats to the hive by other species, Gedde calls attention to threats from within their own species. Invariably, the hive's ability to overcome this threat is dependent upon it being equally aggressive in its tactics of vigilance and defense. The sustainability and productivity of the enterprise of the robber-bee and that of the hive is dependent upon the successful deployment of tactical cunning.

At a time when organizations valorize work that is comfortable and familiar for audiences by virtue of redundant elements, the need arises for alternative practices that provide different rules for engagement. In the Modernist avant-garde, ideas of duplicity and cunning may be read positively to suggest alternative modes of cultural engagement. Today, in the increasingly perceived absence of established traditions, practices that are predicated on, and in turn encourage, more reciprocally cunning and mercurial tactics of engagement are more productive and provoking than ever. Richard Sennett has argued that the point of any cultural or curatorial practice should not be to display objects, but to present a problem, not to make something coherent but something that is purposely contradictory or provocative. The museumification of art has resulted in a scenario where artists believe their work must conform. Alternatively, Sennett argues for a more anarchic museum experience that, rather than imparting knowledge, actively involves the spectator by presenting something to be judged. Engaging the spectator in a constant process of judgment makes possible a productively cunning and mercurial relationship between artists, organizations, and audiences.



Vitrine Backdrop: Samuel Bagster, *The management of bees: with a description of the 'Ladies' safety hive'* (London, 1838).

### Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

John Gedde, *The English apiary, or, The compleat bee-master*: unfolding the whole art and mystery of the management of bees: being a collection and improvement of what has been written by all authors, relating to this subject, as well antient as modern: with a new discovery of an excellent method for making bee-houses and colonies, to free the owners from the great charge and trouble that attends the swarming of bees, and is much more advantageous than any method hitherto practiced (London, 1721).

Michael Kelly, *The mischievous bee*, Sung by Mrs. Warren (Philadelphia, 1808?).

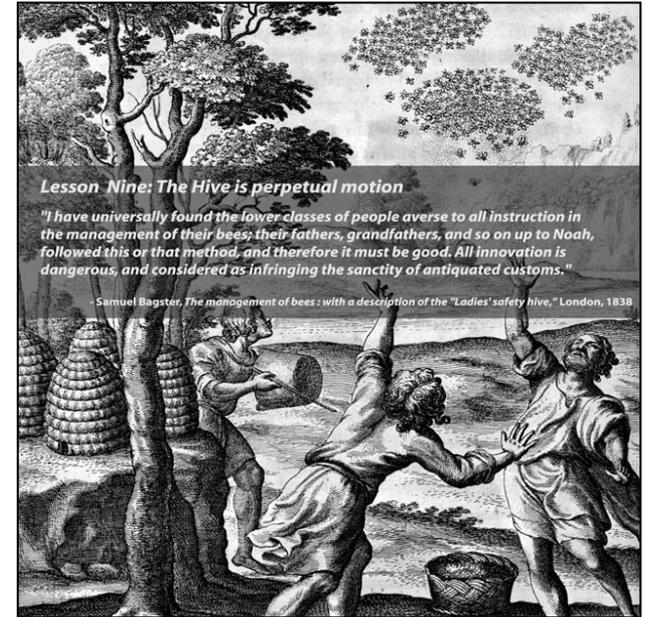
## Vitrine 9: The Hive is perpetual motion

**"I have universally found the lower classes of people averse to all instruction in the management of their bees; their fathers, grandfathers, and so on up to Noah, followed this or that method, and therefore it must be good. All innovation is dangerous, and considered as infringing the sanctity of antiquated customs."** — Samuel Bagster, *The management of bees : with a description of the "Ladies' safety hive"*, London, 1838

*management of bees : with a description of the "Ladies' safety hive", London, 1838*

"The obvious question when you go to the beehouses of those who keep up the old cottage system," Samuel Bagster remarks in *The management of bees* (London, 1838), "is, 'How do your bees get on?' But instead of a clear answer, your friend replies, 'I really cannot tell.'" Bagster criticizes the ignorance of antiquated bee-keeping practices and the resistance of its practitioners to change. Far from being dangerous in the negative sense, innovation is essential for the hive to realize prosperity and true abundance. "Without previous instruction," Bagster continues, "or consulting the most esteemed authors on the subject, I would not advise any one to commence apiarian; and it is in acting contrary to this advice, that the culture of the bees has declined." Bagster also acknowledges the inherent biological risks and dangers of innovation in bee-keeping practice, both of which may be mitigated by scholarly rigor.

While danger and risk are generally viewed as unpredictable threats to innovation, they are in fact the very indicators of and starting points for innovation. Normally, cultural innovation is associated with formal developments in individual practices and techniques, which are then reflected through movements and institutions. The metaphoric associations in this exhibition between the hive and our own cultural institutions are based on formal analogies that permit us to view the archival organization as aestheticized cultural expression—an artwork unto itself. The organization as aesthetic form is more inclined to give itself over to uncontrollable movements and less concerned with countering dissent and valorizing monumentality. In a hypothetical extreme that presumes an absence of such monumental tendencies, innovation and a state of perpetual motion may flourish in new ways and in new locations.



### Lesson Nine: The Hive is perpetual motion

**"I have universally found the lower classes of people averse to all instruction in the management of their bees; their fathers, grandfathers, and so on up to Noah, followed this or that method, and therefore it must be good. All innovation is dangerous, and considered as infringing the sanctity of antiquated customs."**

Samuel Bagster, *The management of bees : with a description of the "Ladies' safety hive"*, London, 1838

Vitrine Backdrop: Virgil, *The works of Virgil: Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis* (London, 1697).

Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

Samuel Bagster, *The management of bees : with a description of the "Ladies' safety hive"* (London, 1838).

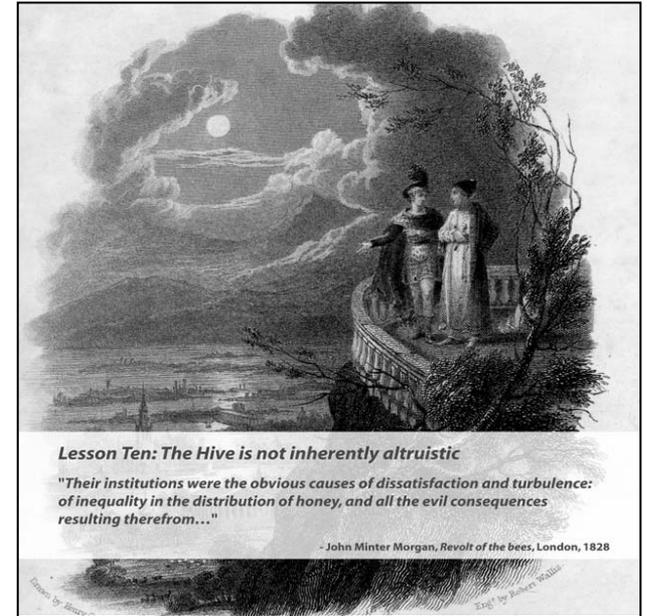
J.W. Gent, *Apiarium, or a discourse of the government and ordering of bees* (London, 1691).

## Vitrine 10: The Hive is not inherently altruistic

***"Their institutions were the obvious causes of dissatisfaction and turbulence: of inequality in the distribution of honey, and all the evil consequences resulting therefrom..."*** — John Minter Morgan, *The revolt of the bees*, London, 1828

John Minter Morgan's *The revolt of the bees* (London, 1828) is a social commentary and satirical polemic about the socio-economic inequalities and hardships for many bees and humans in his day. Morgan's polemic demonstrates both the satirical thrust of the utopian tradition, and his serious yearnings for superior societies and polities in an age of enlightenment, revolution and romanticism. He attributes the suffering that results from the "unequal division of honey" to the institutions and economies of the hive, and proposes the redistribution of wealth through less competitive and more co-operative means. Gregory Claeys has argued that works such as Morgan's *The revolt of the bees* evidence how much of the communitarian aspects of early socialism descended from various utopian forms of social critique. These works also help us plot the development of republican ideals latent in agrarian society into the various forms of nineteenth-century socialism. While Morgan proposes many communitarian solutions to mollify the general state of "dissatisfaction and turbulence," he clearly aspires toward an apian and human society rooted in a fundamentally altruistic spirit. Nevertheless, he is compelled to acknowledge the impossibility of his vision: "Has not the economy of the hive been held up to the world as the model of a perfect commonwealth?" Morgan asks his readers. "Where in the whole range of animated nature can you discover a single instance of beings of the same species destroying each other?" In the allegory, Morgan's protagonist attempts to lessen the suffering around him, but "his arguments were fruitless; for all the powerful bees declared the scheme to be visionary. [...] In proposing any alteration in the oeconomy of the hive, many will erroneously apprehend that, because their particular interests are for the present disturbed, their happiness will be impaired."

Can an alternative institution built on alternative forms of cultural altruism and expenditure be envisioned? In the end, the health of our organizations and our societies may well be secured neither by pure greed nor pure altruism, but a dynamic tension wherein our tendency toward the unaltruistic is tempered by an enduring longing for a society of unbridled generosity and equality. In this fashion, cultural organizations lessen their dependence upon classical models of economics in which principles of scarcity dominate and inequality is accepted, and approach an ideal of cultural equity and optimism.



Vitrine Backdrop: John Minter Morgan, *The revolt of the bees* (see below).

**Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:**

John Minter Morgan, *The revolt of the bees* (London, 1828).

Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees, or, Private Vices, Public Benefits* (London, 1723).

## Vitrine 11: The Hive embraces martyrdom

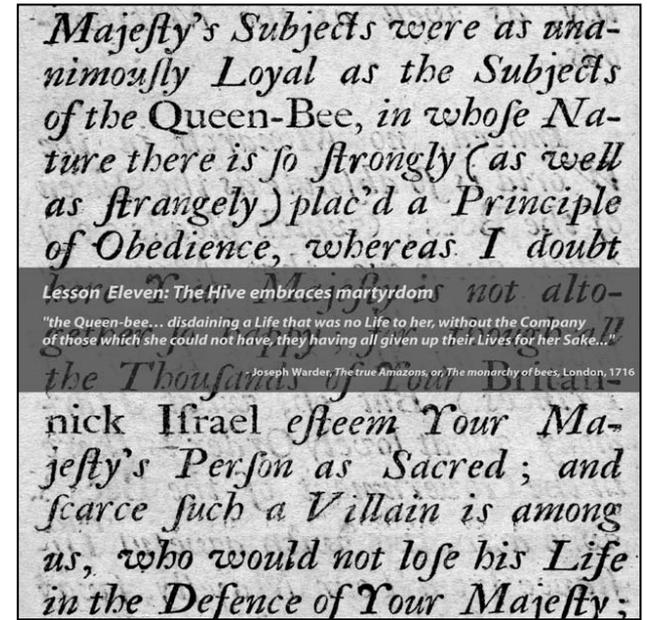
*"the Queen-bee... disdain[ing] a Life that was no Life to her, without the Company of those which she could not have, they having all given up their Lives for her Sake."*

— Joseph Warder, *The true Amazons, or, The monarchy of bees*, London, 1716

In Joseph Warder's *The true Amazons, or, The monarchy of bees* (London, 1716), featured in lesson three, the author casts the society of bees as a reflection of the wisdom and "lovely Order" of the English monarchic society, in which it is divinely given that loyal subjects sacrifice themselves for their Queen. He runs the hazard of destroying a swarm of bees to test the analogy. For Warder, the life of the hive is predicated on the ongoing sacrifice of the worker bees for their queen. Similarly, as this exhibition suggests, the perpetuation of the contemporary archive is predicated on a dynamic tension between sustainability and sacrifice. This tension is also expressed through metaphors of bees at war over their visions for the hive, as in Book IV of Virgil's *Georgics* (London, 1697), in which every "Knight is proud to prove his Worth" and goes to battle while "heaps of slaughter'd Soldiers bite the Ground."

Today, more than ever, the impulse to preserve stems from an awareness of the transience of cultural artifacts and the challenges to sustainability that haunt the contemporary archive. Thomas Keenan reminds us in this publication that "Museums are built on loss and its recollection: there is no museum without the threat of erasure or incompleteness, no museum not shadowed by the imagination of the impending destruction of what it therefore seeks to stabilize and maintain. [...] The [museum...] would in turn be registered by recurrent fantasies of the museum in ruins, victim from the outset of time's own depredations." In this model, fantasies of the museum in flames motivate and ultimately facilitate the preservation of cultural artifact. The archive's will to permanence is both life-giving and death-dealing, and thus constantly engages in a modality of self-sacrifice. When faced with the infinite abundance of cultural artifact, and the compulsion to sustain itself, the archive meets the impossibility of complete preservation and is compelled into a state of self-martyrdom.

This exhibition explored how ideas of transience lie at the heart of archival practices, organizations, and paper-hives. At the core of all these lessons is the notion that the hive is an archival industry that must ultimately embrace martyrdom, which we understand to be a negative maneuver in the interest of positive ends. The original binding for the Pastorius manuscript, displayed in Vitrine 2, serves as both an indexical trace of the paper-hive that once was, perpetuating its memory, and at the same time is a *vanitas* representing the transience and fragility of all archives.



Vitrine Backdrop: Philips van Marnix van St. Aldegonde, *The bee hive of the Romish Church* (London, 1623).

Publications on display from the University of Pennsylvania Library:

Virgil, *The works of Virgil: Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis* (London, 1697).

Original binding of Daniel Pastorius, *His Hive, Mellitrophium Alvear or, Rusca Apium, Begun Anno Do[m]ijni or, in the year of Christian Account 1696* (Germantown, 1696-1865).



Lesson 7: The Hive is not impervious to critique (center), and adjacent vitrines



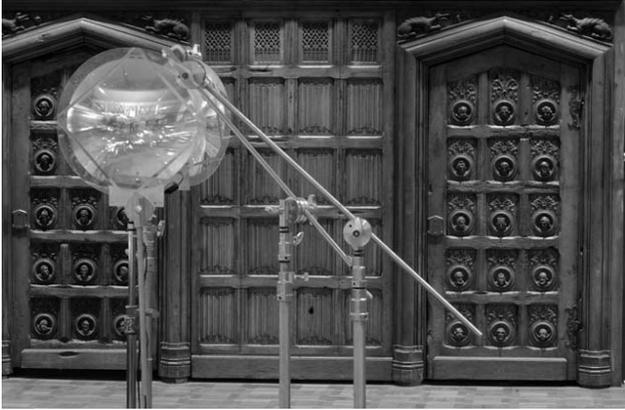
Observation hive, with St. James Bible inside, Printed by Charles Barker, London, 1683?



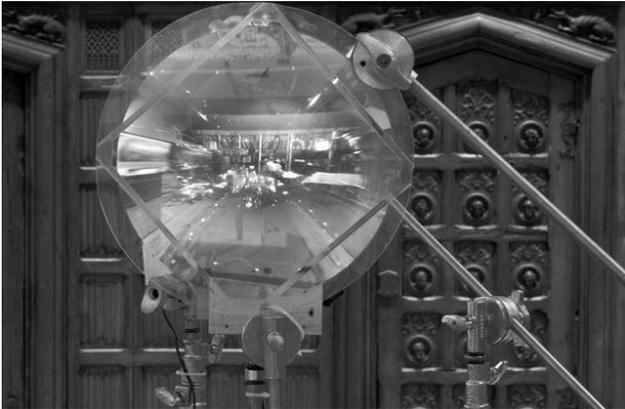
Lesson 1: The Hive is a living organism (center), and 2: The Hive is an archival industry (right)



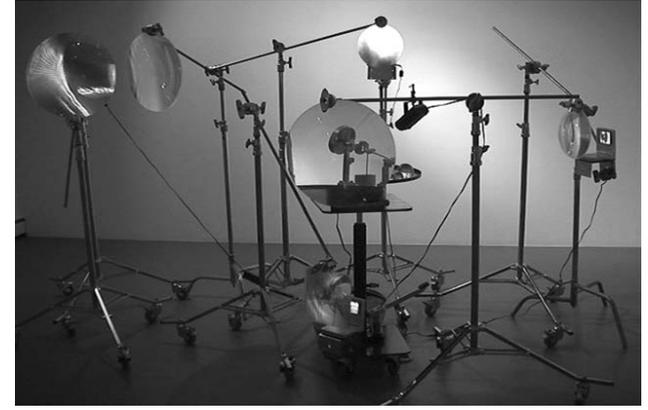
Installation view, with Lesson 8: The Hive is cunning and mercurial (as seen in distortion lens)



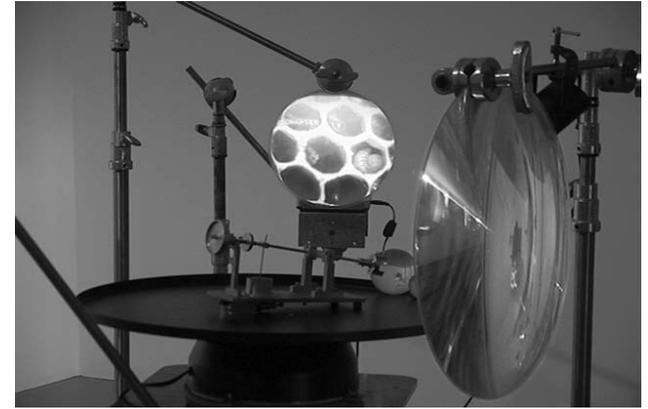
*Installation by Michael Zansky, with video still from "in which the thinking man finds himself..."*



*Installation view, detail*



*Prototype for installation by Michael Zansky (2004)*



*Installation view, detail*

## Credits and Acknowledgements

### Exhibition: The Revolt of the Bees

Curator: Aaron Levy

Associate Curator: Thaddeus Squire, Peregrine Arts, Inc.

Curatorial texts by Aaron Levy and Thaddeus Squire

Sculptural installation by Michael Zansky

Exhibition research and concept development: Erica Fruiterman

Installation photography: Aaron Levy, Mary Gaston

*The Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Pennsylvania*

Director: Michael Ryan

Design assistance and installation: Andrea Gottschalk

General Staff: Lynne Farrington, John Pollack, Jennifer Sanchez, Nancy Shawcross, Dan Traister

Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image: Greg Bear

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### Companion Video: "in which the thinking man finds himself in a gigantic orphanage (where people are continually proving to him that he has no parents)"

A 2004 Slought Foundation Production (26 min)

*Filmed in Founder's Hall at Girard College, Philadelphia on July 28, 2004*

Directed and Produced by Aaron Levy

Executive Producer: Mari Shaw

Associate Producer: Michael Zansky

Voiceover: Gary Indiana

*Monologue adapted from Thomas Bernhard's Gargoyles (1970) by Aaron Levy*

*Recorded on June 9, 2004 in New York City*

Directors of Photography: Matt Schechtman, Philip Armand

Literary Advisor: Jean-Michel Rabaté

Production Designer: Michael Zansky

Grip, Lighting: Robert Albrecht

Editing: Aaron Levy, with Victoria Cohen, Michael Zansky

Assistant Script Editors: Linda Petock, Elizabeth Rywelski

Assistant to the Director: Victoria Cohen

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*We gratefully acknowledge the support of Girard College staff, including Dominic Cermele, President; Mari Shaw, Trustee; Elizabeth Laurent, Archivist; Andy Wright, Electrician; Karen Sullivan, Collections Specialist; and Kerry Porter, Audio Video Department.*

**Companion Video Documentation**

## Synopsis

Founder's Hall is a magnificent architectural landmark on the campus of Girard College in Philadelphia completed in the Greek Revival style in 1845. Four monumental staircases at Founder's Hall lead to a room that houses unconventional archival material such as nineteenth-century bank ledgers as well as laundry and food receipts for students at the school. These seemingly mundane records highlight the degree to which the immense wealth of Stephen Girard, which financed the grandeur of Girard College and endowed its operation as a boarding school for underprivileged children, was secured through minute transactions. This material culture exists in a state of haphazard accumulation and romantic degradation that is startling in juxtaposition with the building's architectural splendor.<sup>1</sup>

The video "in which the thinking man finds himself in a gigantic orphanage..." documents the third floor of Founder's Hall. The voiceover, read by Gary Indiana, has been adapted from Thomas Bernhard's *Gargoyles* (English trans. 1970), and features a paranoid prince who laments his orphan status, material accumulation, and inheritance. The video explores the idea of a collection in demise at a vulnerable and destructive moment in its history, and invites its audience to imaginatively recreate and reconfigure the history of an archive through contemporary practice.

The materials in the Southeast quadrant of the third floor include bound volumes, full file drawers and stacks of papers, institutional records and drawings relating to the construction of Founder's Hall, the operation of Girard College, and the history of nineteenth-century American education. We have seen glimpses of records of campus purchases, heating receipts, as well as original drawings by J. Walters for Founder's Hall. We see visitation logs from the 1860's and 1870's, when Founder's Hall was one of three major tourist destinations

in the city, and also staff and student records from Girard College's earliest years. In addition to the textual materials, the room contains notable artifacts associated with the school, including the huge chunk of anthracite coal which was mined from Girard Estate lands in northeastern Pennsylvania and shipped down to the Board of City Trusts in Philadelphia. This piece of coal, as seen in the movie, represents the source of nineteenth and early twentieth-century wealth that enabled the Girard Estate to grow and operate the school.

Stephen Girard College was founded in Philadelphia in 1833, after American financier and philanthropist Stephen Girard died in 1831 as the richest man in America. (He set aside funds to build Founder's Hall according to specific instructions which served as the basis for the first architectural competition in America, and which challenged the winning architects and engineers.) The College opened on January 1, 1848 as the world's first residential school for disadvantaged children, grades one through 12. Girard College has provided disadvantaged students with a free liberal arts education in a residential setting for over 150 years. Girard College has served as a model for other pedagogical experiments in Early America as well as for private boarding schools for the disadvantaged, such as the Hershey School.

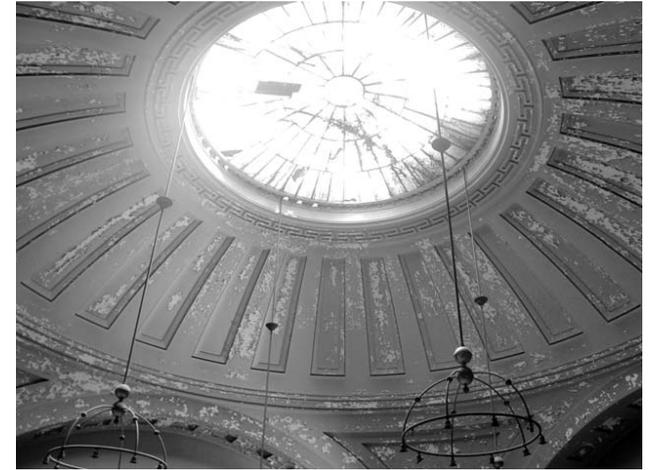
Enrollment in the College was originally for white, male orphans only. Following a series of successful Supreme Court challenges, today nearly 89% percent of students are African-American and half are female. All students lack one or both parents and have limited finances.

### Notes

1. See pages 90-95 of this publication for visual documentation of Founder's Hall. It is the understanding of the editors that third floor access to Founder's Hall is currently restricted by the Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections due to concerns about the structure and safety of the ceiling.



*Classroom (3rd Floor Southeast quadrant), Founder's Hall, Girard College*  
*Note: This and all subsequent photographs are images of Founder's Hall, Girard College*





*Classroom (3rd Floor Southwest quadrant)*



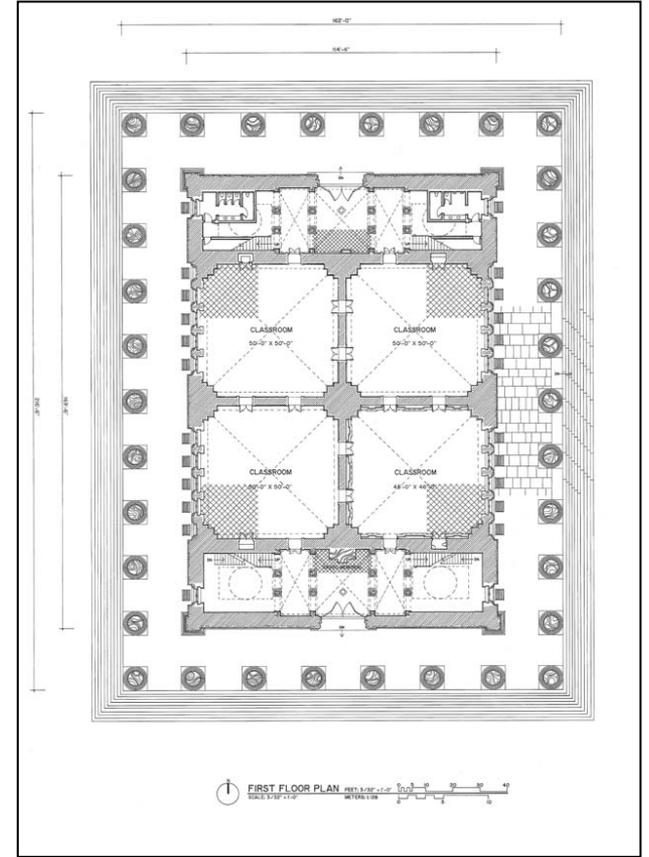
*Classroom (3rd Floor Northeast quadrant)*



Landing (3rd Floor South), with door to Southeast quadrant, left



Front (South) Elevation



Survey (1st Floor), Drawn 1973?

## Monologue

*Adapted from Thomas Bernhard's Gargoyles. Read by Gary Indiana on the companion DVD.*

When we seek a person, it is as if we go about in a vast morgue looking for him. People walk with one another and talk with one another and sleep with one another and do not know one another. If people knew one another they would not walk, talk, or sleep with one another. *Do you know yourself?*, I often ask myself. A depth is always a height, the deeper the depth of the height, the higher the height of the depth, and vice versa. You imagine that you peer down into an infinite well (as into an infinite person), into his infinite height, size, and so on... I believe that my son is in London because I know that he is in London; I believe I am writing him a letter because I know I am writing him a letter, but I do not know that he is in London because I believe that he is in London.

The world as a whole has become entirely provincial. Whenever my son was in cities he always reported that he was happy, but about his stays in the country the word was always *unhappy, unhappy*. Sometimes he unexpectedly has knowledge of things that astonish me, though what he knows has absolutely no application to anything.

We have the highest suicide rate in Europe. Why? Everything is suicide. Whatever we live, whatever we read, whatever we think—all manuals for suicide. No matter what we are reminded of, what our attention is called to, our attention is called to death. Standing at the window in the night, watching several acrobats walking tightropes stretched across infinity—to call out to them is to incur the death penalty. But whenever we speak of suicide there is something *comical* about it. *I put a bullet into (or through) my head, I shoot, I hang myself. How can I ask you to trust me*, I wrote to my son yesterday, *when I do not trust you on a single point?*

We are continually trying out on others what we do not try out on ourselves. We continually

kill others for purposes of study. This morning, I suddenly felt the need to lie flat on the floor. I undressed and lay down stark naked. At breakfast I told the others about it, but nobody laughed. I said to my elder sister: *The poetic is suspect to me because in the world it arouses the impression that the poetic is poetry, and vice versa, that poetry is the poetic. The only poetry is nature, the only nature is poetry.* I very often see my son somewhere on a London street that I am familiar with from my own days of studying in London. Trees. People. People as trees. Trees as people. My son is wearing the same suit I wore when I was in London. Sometimes he walks across Trafalgar Square or through Hyde Park with *my* thoughts, with *my* problems. And I think: He is crossing Trafalgar Square and walking through Hyde Park with your problems.

Last night, I had got up and gone down into the library and had said to the books: *My food!* But now this food is all poisoned. Every day I wake up and think: *To whom am I going to bequeath everything?* Since nobody else is even possible, I come back to the fact that I must bequeath everything to my own son. Yesterday I had the notion—I was on my way to breakfast—that I had ordered all the trees cut down. I look down from the castle and see nothing but millions of felled trees. I saw the whole countryside covered with the sawdust from my trees, and I waded through this sawdust down to the Mur and then down to the Plattensee. There were no people to be seen, none left. Probably they all were smothered under the sudden rain of sawdust.

There are people who die with the greatest decisiveness and are decisively dead once and for all. I too would like to die like that. But most people die vaguely, vaguely to the eye and vaguely to the brain. They are never dead. No matter what we amuse ourselves with, we are always preoccupied only with death.

My sisters, but my daughters also, try to keep me going by means of little or big deceptions,

and by one outrageous deception above all: Each of them knows in her heart that the world will collapse when I suddenly am no longer here. When I lose all desire to go on and have myself laid out in the pavilion, I shall have myself laid out in the pavilion like my father. In the nature of things it sounds completely different when my son in England, in London, says at Victoria Station, for example, that *he hates people*, completely different from the way it sounds when I in Hochgobernitz say that *I hate people*, yet it is the same ridiculous hatred for the same ridiculous people.

In the course of the changes I intend to make in Hochgobernitz, everything is going to be restricted. An enlargement of the estates involves a restriction of our lives. Again and again I reflect that I have been left alone. And I feel this to be the most loathsome of thoughts. Loneliness is man's route to loathsomeness. Age is an enormous loathsomeness. Sometimes I have the impulse to summon my relatives and shout into their faces that they ought to stop being permanently dead. It is the same every day. I leave my room, I leave Hochgobernitz—in my thoughts—and everywhere I feel the same cold. It is my duty to write to my son in London and tell him what is awaiting him here in Hochgobernitz when I am dead: *Cold. Isolation. Madness. Deadly monologuing. Madness emerging from himself and appearing as madness of the world, of nature.* My father often spoke of selling Hochgobernitz and everything that belonged to it. For days he talked about freeing himself from Hochgobernitz, but when he thought of the workmen, of the gravel pit workmen, of the millers, of the sawyers, who were dependent on Hochgobernitz and therefore upon him alone, he threw up the plan... Toward the end he frequently said: *I am tired, I am tired of Hochgobernitz, but I am too tired to give up Hochgobernitz, I would rather give myself up.* He had a miserable end. Suddenly, two days before his suicide, he ceased his incomprehensible monologue. This highly intelligent person! The crucial pages were ripped out of his favorite books. He had eaten pages from *The World as Will and Idea*, for instance. *Schopenhauer has always been the best nourishment for me*, my father had written a few hours before his suicide, on a scrap

of paper found by a member of the coroner's commission. His madness did not exclude a deliberate intention to kill himself.

When someone close to us has committed suicide, we ask: *Why suicide?* And yet we must say that everything in the suicide's life—all his life was a suicide—is part of the reason for his suicide. The act of suicide always strikes us as sudden. On the walls of the castle I can endure my solitude because I am completely alone on the walls. *Have I always been alone?* Perhaps I ought to put it: *You are not yet alone.* Or: *The father is always farther along than the son, and vice versa, the son always farther along than the father...*

In the autumn I think that the coming winter will put everything to rights, in the winter, the coming spring, in the spring, the coming summer. In reality nothing happens any more. Suddenly I feel that I am rotting, rotting at a fantastic speed; I hear myself rotting, I hear it and want to get away from the place which I suddenly become aware of as the site of decay. I look down upon myself from high above and observe: *You are no longer anything.* In dreams I am walking through an endless hall toward an audience which is the most important audience of my life. Since the hall I am walking through is a high, dizzying hall, an infinite hall, the audience is not possible. I want to know who (or what) is receiving me, will receive me, but I walk and walk and walk and do not find out. There are times when I tell myself: *You have nothing left but hopelessness and you must be content with that.* Every day you picture hopelessness differently, you stick out your tongue at it, so that you can see it laugh.

Hochgobernitz I love and I feel it to be a lifelong prison. Calculating machines, that is all human beings are. The truth is, all we hear in this world is: *That is good, that is not good, this man is thus*, and so on.... How often we hear: *He has a keen mind, he hasn't, he speaks French fluently, he doesn't, he is materialistic, he isn't, he is a Communist, he isn't, he is poetic, he isn't, he is rich, he isn't.* Disgusting! When I am in the library, everybody thinks I

am busy with books because I am in the library. But in reality I have not read a book for years and stopped studying atlases, and I stay in the library only to be inside myself. The world is more and more being used up by us; we use up the world more than the world uses us up. Torment is inside my body like a second body, inside my whole body like a second whole body. I have earned the right to an idea when I have worked (metaphysically) all my life for this idea, when I have lived for it, existed for it, been mistreated and denounced for it.

You can say of many of them that they grew up in a dry, a damp, a warm, or a cold house. *Your home was cold*, you could say to many, and to many others: *You come from a dry home*. Hochgobernitz is the proof that a building can destroy people who are completely at its mercy. But it does not do any good to leave the building that will destroy you.

I once suddenly awakened in the middle of the night and saw a gigantic note pinned to the sky on which the word *open* was written. My laughter awakened everyone in the house. They rushed to the windows and saw nothing. I kept saying, *Open! Open! is written there, open is actually written up there*, but they saw nothing, thought me crazy, and I chased them back to their beds. In the nature of things I am more and more afraid of myself. In court I once met a person I had never seen before, but who reminded me of all the people I have ever seen. He said he had something magnificent in store for his head. He put a knife to my hand and said: *Cut my head off, my dear fellow. I have long waited for you to turn up to cut off my head. For I have something magnificent in store for my mind. Don't be afraid*, this eccentric said, *I have calculated everything in advance. It cannot go wrong. Here, cut!* I seized the head and cut it off. I was astonished at how easy it was. The head then said: *You didn't seriously imagine you could cut off my head, did you? Or did you?*

We are without parents. We are orphans. That is our condition, and we shall not, Europe will not escape from this condition ever again. Never before has Hochgobernitz been so utterly

cut off from the world and simultaneously so dependent on the world. I have the idea, that we are writing letters, sending letters, and receiving letters, and that the signatures on all these letters are illegible. Suppose I were to write an essay in my room, a study bearing the simple title *My Room*, into which I would squeeze the entire world. I would squeeze the entire room into my room and into my study—no, not a study. The thinking man's task is more and more to remove images from his memory. His goal has been attained when there is no longer a single image in his brain. *I bear no guilt*, I often tell myself, *I know I bear no guilt*. As long as I have been alive nothing but the attempt to communicate has consumed me. At first, my mother thought of me as a crime against herself, later as a crime she had committed. For parents, children are an incurable tumor which deforms them for life. I withdraw more and more into my room as a sickroom. Best of all to be in bed and be able to fall asleep—for a long time now that has all I want or need. Have you properly made use of your body? Of your mind? Of life?

If we say, *he is a catastrophic person*, without knowing him, if we say, *he is dead*, and so on... We see in a person frailties which at once make us see the frailties of all communities. Even as a child my father toyed with the thought of killing himself. It cost him the greatest self-control, whenever he crossed the Ache, not to throw himself into the Ache. The millions of experiments lead back to the source. These experiments in the mass and in so called untrammelled nature. We always live in the delusion (because we think it will enable us to live) that we can escape completely from at least one of the elements of nature. We are no longer fearful unto death, we go to death.

The catastrophe begins with getting out of bed. With putting everything on a philosophical basis, with making a public display of oneself. My sickness is underlining important things; all these underlined sentences begin with the destruction of these sentences.

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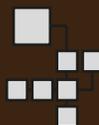
**Essays by Anthony Grafton and Thomas Keenan**

*With audio and visual contributions by Gary Indiana and Michael Zansky*

*Includes a complimentary companion DVD "in which the thinking man finds himself in a gigantic orphanage," which explores the archive in disarray*



The hive is a living organism, and the living organism is a metaphor for the American organization, which is both the embodiment of and emblem for contemporary cultural practice. Every hive is constituted of thousands of bees: small organisms of finite lifespan subject to an inexorable cycle of life and death. The hive as a whole, however, provides an architecture for overcoming death by possessing a different sustainability—one wrought through continuous cycles of generational passing and reemergence, for which death is not a consideration. Extending the metaphor of the hive into the cultural realm suggests new and more hopeful visions of the cultural organization. Can we imagine our organizations operating without consideration or fear of fragility and sustainability as they envision their futures?



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Front image: from *The works of Virgil: Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis*, London, 1697

Back: film still, in which the thinking man finds himself in a gigantic orphanage, Founder's Hall at Girard College, 2004