

Partial Perspectives and the Futures of Feminist Archives: Case Studies of Bildwechsel
Women+ Video Archive Network and the Canadian Women Artist History Initiative

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ABSTRACT

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When women, queers, trans people, people of colour, the working class or poor are excluded from history, it is too often assumed that their participation in culture is nil. My work follows decades of feminist theory in objection to the idea that exclusion from dominant historical narrative translates to a lack of significance. This thesis explores two feminist art historical projects that combat this notion as they run parallel to the mainstream of Western art history. These are the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI), based Concordia University's Art History Department in Montreal and devoted to the synthesis of research on Canadian women artists born before 1925 (1965 for architects), and Bildwechsel Women+, a community-driven video archive network with sites in Hamburg, Berlin, Glasgow, Basel, and Warsaw.

I present the two divergent archival structures as case studies illustrated through an interpretation of visual document. *In the Museum*, a short video created by founding Bildwechsel archivist, durbahn, shows the organization's Hamburg archive. CWAHI is depicted in a series of six cognitive maps drawn for me by CWAHI's founders and research assistants. Depicting the two archives from internally situated perspectives, these images inform my reading of the archive as a tool for self-determined histories. This thesis plays its role in the history of feminist art histories, representing the first detailed, scholarly writing on CWAHI and Bildwechsel in the English language.

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Introduction

When women, queers, trans people, people of colour, the working class and the poor are excluded from history, it is too often assumed that their participation in culture is nil. My work follows decades of feminist theory in objection to the idea that a lack of inclusion in dominant historical narrative signifies a lack of significance. In 1971 art historian Linda Nochlin published “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” This influential essay questions the notion that the absence of a consolidated historical record of women’s art means there was nothing to record. Instead, as Nochlin points out, certain artists have simply been ignored or written out by historians constructing a patriarchal notion of greatness.¹ In her essay “The Return of Feminism(s) and the Visual Arts, 1970-2009,” art historian Amelia Jones identifies a gap between the long-standing support for feminist practices and histories of art in academic and community settings, and the visibility of feminist and women’s work in the commercial branches of the art world. According to Jones, it is only within recent years that commercial art galleries have taken a substantial interest in feminism as it informs art histories and practices;² however, this international rise in interest does not seem to apply to certain prestigious North American art institutions. In her article “Women Artists Feminism and the Museum: Beyond the Blockbuster Retrospective,” Joanne Heath demonstrates this point with statistics provided by feminist interventionist artist agitators the Guerrilla Girls in their poster “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?” Originally published in 1989, the poster cited less than 5% representation of women artists in the Metropolitan Museum in New

1 Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists,” *Art News*, 69.9 (January 1971): 22-39, 67-71.

2 Amelia Jones, “The Return of Feminism(s) and the Visual Arts, 1970-2009,” in *Feminisms is Still Our Name* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) 14.

York. Updated in 2005, the work demonstrates a decline in numbers to less than 3%.³ The gender gap in representation is compounded by the exclusion of artists of colour. Another Guerrilla Girls poster, “Horror on the National Mall!” reveals that artists on display at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. in 2007 were 98% male and 99.9% white.⁴ Patriarchal history presents itself as the ultimate, objective perspective, disseminated through the disembodied gaze of the expert looking at the historical subject from the outside. According to philosopher Donna Haraway, the preoccupation with objectivity, seen to be expert and external to the subject matter, removes the white male’s body from the history he writes. Only his gaze and his voice are left speak for his subject. Hence, the white male perspective is not presented as such in the dominant historical discourse.⁵

Patriarchal art historical discourse has been organized into schools of production viewed as a direct lineage, a tactic that further narrows the field of art history. As art historian Griselda Pollock states in her article, “Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space, and the Archive,” “the models of proper art history are linear.”⁶ Traditional art historical discourse has identified what is important through a model of patriarchal inheritance. In this model, mainstream critics automatically favour schools of art considered to build upon the innovations of the last group of great white male artists.⁷

3 Joanne Health, “Women Artists Feminism and the Museum: Beyond the Blockbuster Retrospective,” in *Feminism Reframed: Reflections on Art and Difference*, ed. Alexandra M. Kokoli (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008) 21.

4 “Horror on the National Mall! Thousands of women locked in basements of D.C. museums!” *Guerrilla Girls*, Guerrilla Girls Inc., 2007.

5 Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies*, 14.3 (Autumn, 1988): 581-582.

6 Griselda Pollock, “Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space, and the Archive,” in *Feminisms is Still Our Name*, eds. Hedlin Hayden & Sjöholm Skrubbe (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) 130.

7 Janice Anderson, “Creating Room: Canadian women's mural painting and rereadings of the public and

Histories that represent the interests of the affluent, cisgendered⁸ white male continue to systematically exclude women, people of colour, trans and queer agents. In her book *Tendencies*, queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick outlines the “systematic denial” of truths about queer culture in mainstream education.⁹ Leslie Feinberg’s *Transgender Warriors* presents a history of trans and gender non-conforming individuals, pushed into the margins through “strategically engrained bigotry.”¹⁰ In her film *The Watermelon Woman* (1996), Cheryl Dunye plays the largely autobiographical story of a queer black woman filmmaker in America seeking to represent, as Dunye states in the film, “stories [that] have never been told.”¹¹ In order to point to and cope with the gap in history left by the erasure of black lesbian culture, Dunye invents a black lesbian film actress whose buried life story is painstakingly uncovered throughout the fictional documentary. The film ends with the statement, “Sometimes you have to create your own history.”¹² Dunye’s character, also named Cheryl, digs through archives in order to access obscure slivers of information through which she crafts the piecemeal biography of a black lesbian actress on the periphery of film history.

In her book, *An Archive of Feeling*, cultural theorist Ann Cvetkovich identifies the private” (Diss. Concordia University, 2002) 6.

8 The latin prefix “cis” connotes that which remains in its original position, as opposed to “trans,” which indicates that the referent is in motion or has moved from one location to another. In the context of gender, “cis” refers to those who continue to identify with the identity assigned to them at birth. Ellen Greenblatt, *Serving LGBTIQ Library and Archives Users: Essays on Outreach, Service, Collections and Access*. The term “cisgendered” has been adopted by many as an alternative to forms such as “biological male” or “women born women,” which present troubling implications that transgendered and transsexual people are somehow biologically unsound, or that gender itself is initially determined by the shape of one’s body, rather than imposed at the time of one’s birth by social readings of human anatomy streamlined into two narrow types.

9 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994) 2.

10 Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) 122-123.

11 Matt Richardson, “Our Stories Have Never Been Told,” *Black Camera*, 2.2 (Spring 2001): 104. Citing Cheryl Dunye, *The Watermelon Woman* (New York: Women Make Movies, 1996).

12 Richardson 100. Citing Dunye.

archive as holding an “important place in the lesbian popular imaginary,” citing Dunye’s film as a leading example.¹³ Cvetkovich identifies a particularly “affective power” residing in an archival space able to “preserve and produce not just knowledge but feeling.”¹⁴ Thus, Cvetkovich expands the term archive from its traditional meaning as a store of documents.¹⁵ The archive is a simultaneously discursive and intuitive entity. It is a potential producer of community identity; a methodology for the preservation of collective memory; a theory of nonlinear history, and a way to commemorate loss and engage with histories that have been subject to erasure through censorship or exclusionary notions of worth.¹⁶ Together, these modes constitute what I will call the archival structure. The standard form of the archive echoes nevertheless with the rigid tropes of linear chronology.¹⁷ As queer critic Charles E. Morris points out in his article, “Archival Queer,” many archives contribute to exclusionary historical practice through their omission or burial of materials pertaining to particular identities. Morris cites the example of the *American Rhetorical Discourse* archive, a “massive [online] bank” of American speeches that contains no LGBTQ content.¹⁸ In her article “Theorizing Shiny Things,” feminist theorist Kathy Ferguson suggests that this exclusivity may always

13 Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Identity*. (London: Duke University Press, 2003) 240.

14 Cvetkovich (2003) 241.

15 According to philosopher Jacques Derrida, the term archive is derived from the ancient Greek *arkieon*, meaning “a house, a domicile, an address.” In particular, *arkieon* referred to “the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, who commanded.” There, documents pertaining to matters of law were kept in the custody of the ruling class. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 2.

16 These conceptions of the archive are respectively derived from Scrott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture and Difference* ((Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 125; Pollock, (2010) 133; Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005) 152, 169.

17 Karen Beckman, “The Archive, the Phallus, and the Future,” *Camera Obscura*, 22.64 (January 2007): 188.

18 Charles E. Morris, “Archival Queer,” *Rhetorical & Public Affairs*, 9.1 (Spring 2006): 146.

haunt the archival form, but that it does not preclude the radical potential of the archive to connect marginalized peoples with their histories and communities.¹⁹ Ferguson posits that all radical archiving faces a paradox; while each archive produces its own patterns of exclusion, those that are committed to counter-hegemonic work strategically employ the archival structure to create space for previously excluded histories.²⁰ As no archive, survey, or historical text can ever be complete, collectors of historical documents will always benefit from an awareness of the exclusivity of their own projects. Through self-critical analysis, creators of archives can combat racism, sexism, gender normativity, and EuroAmericentrism within their own projects and in historical discourse at large.

Over the past three years I have become familiar with two feminist art historical projects that run parallel to the mainstream of Western art history. The Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI, 2008) and Bildwechsel Women+, a community-driven video archive network (1979), actively create alternatives to the canon by charting historical trajectories for marginalized artists and artistic practices through the past and into the future. Based in Concordia University's Art History Department in Montreal, Canada, CWAHI is devoted to gathering research on Canadian women artists born before 1925 (1965 for architects²¹). Collecting biographical data, exhibition reviews, and articles, CWAHI's holdings are comprised of a series of artist files built mostly from secondary materials, though copies of artists' correspondence are occasionally included. I

19 Charles E. Morris also sees the radical potential of the archive stating, "Queer archives affect me viscerally, evoking deep yearning and defiant purpose." Morris 145.

20 Kathy Ferguson, "Theorizing Shiny Things: Archival Labours," *Theory & Event*, 14.4 (2008): 3-7.

21 The later birth date for architects reflects the history of women's exclusion from the profession of architecture in Canada prior to 1920 when Marjorie Hill, the country's first woman architect, graduated from the University of Toronto. Joan Grierson, *The First Women in Canadian Architecture* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008) 13.

refer to both the physical and virtual space of CWAHI as an archive, but “documentation centre” is preferred by some of its members.²² With the former term, a store of information gains a certain symbolic legibility within the broader discourse around archival practice. It is for this reason that I privilege the term archive here. Working primarily with the medium of video, Bildwechsel, based in Europe, collects and creates screening and distribution opportunities for contemporary video makers, as well as filmmakers whose work has been transferred to video. Their collection includes feature films, journal-style personal video works, community documentaries, music videos, abstract works, and other moving image creations. The two archives deploy feminist strategy differently, responding to the divergent histories and oppression of two very different groupings of people.²³ While CWAHI is a major vehicle for the reinsertion of women into Canada's art historical discourse, doing work that destabilizes a still active patriarchal model of the past, Bildwechsel is focused on collecting as a community-building strategy, providing opportunities for women, trans, and queer artists to engage with one another's work and write their own histories through the archival process. CWAHI's national focus contrasts with Bildwechsel, which collects internationally with archives located in Glasgow, Basel, Warsaw, Hamburg, and Berlin. Both projects participate in the proliferation of partial histories that effectively counter the grand narrative perpetuated by institutions like those criticized by the Guerrilla Girls. I present case studies of CWAHI and Bildwechsel in this thesis to demonstrate the necessity for this proliferation of feminist art historical narratives to suit the remarkably broad scope of

²² Founder B, interview by author, Montreal, 27 January 2010.

²³ Anna Everett, “On Cyberfeminism and Cyberwomanism,” in *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*, ed. Vicki Callahan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010) 387.

production historically excluded from the mainstream. My main goal, however, is to discuss the unique ways each project aids the writing of feminist histories, situating each case studies in a diverse and ever-expanding series of feminisms. Despite the differences between CWAHI and Bildwechsel, I have chosen to present them together as each project addresses the still present gaps in the narrative of Western art history in its own way.

CWAHI and Bildwechsel reclaim historiographical space for women. I will argue, through my examination of both, that the archival form can be simultaneously a conservational and generative agent in the construction of alternative histories. My exploration of CWAHI and Bildwechsel is built around two interwoven theories crucial to the construction of alternative histories. The first is cultural theorist Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledges, which calls for the refusal of historical hegemony and the proliferation of embodied perspectives.²⁴ According to Haraway, history is written responsibly when its authors address their roles as its writers, thereby situating themselves in the process and product. Patriarchal history presents itself as the ultimate, objective perspective, disseminated through the disembodied gaze of the expert looking at the historical subject from the outside. Eurocentrism and the authoritative voices of the white male are dominant within Western history. A notable art historical example is H.W. Janson's influential textbook, authoritatively titled *The History of Art*, which included no woman, black, or Latin artists in its 1962 edition. In an interview with art historian Eleanor Dickinson in 1979, Janson explained that his book contained only those artists who "have changed the history of art."²⁵ Cloaking his perspective in "objectivity," yet

24 Haraway (1988) 584-585.

25 Eleanor Dickinson, "Report on the History of the Women's Caucus for Art," in *Blaze: Discourse on Art, Women and Feminism*, eds. Karen Frostig and Kathy A. Halamka (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) 38.

patently favouring white male artists, histories such as Janson's cannot truly call themselves complete. Indeed, there is no such thing as an exhaustive survey.

Countering the very notion that any account, be it scientific or historical, can ever represent its subject fully, Haraway argues that, “only partial perspective promises objective vision.”²⁶ Haraway argues for a redefinition of objectivity with the acknowledgement that interested parties all produce bodies of knowledge. Each historical account represents a limited perspective. If historical accounts remain self-consciously partial and open, they represent with integrity something that will always be true of history: that it is always inflected with the perspective of its authors and, furthermore, that it will change over time according to the perspective of its readers.²⁷ Haraway calls for a vast array of partial perspectives, each producing embodied knowledge, to replace the totalizing “whole” of any narrative that claims a mastery over a singular, hegemonic knowledge.²⁸ While the dominant narrative maintains its hold, a dynamic series of situated histories grows with the constant construction and reconfiguration of counter narratives, like those produced by Bildwechsel and CWAHI.

Philosopher Elizabeth Grosz’s description of the structure of feminist history adds the dimension of time to the theoretical model I use in this thesis. In her article, “Histories of a Feminist Future,” Grosz states that, “the past, a past no longer understood as inert or given, may help engender a productive future, a future beyond patriarchy.”²⁹ Grosz considers the model of history composed of privileged deposits for posterity arcane. Grosz’s feminist vision of the future does not deal in a currency of “gold

26 Haraway (1988) 584.

27 Bravmann 125-127.

28 Haraway (1988) 584.

29 Elizabeth Grosz, “Histories of a Feminist Future,” *Signs* 25.4 (Summer 2000): 1018.

nuggets,” as she calls them: objects or pieces of knowledge valued for some sense of their pure form. These pieces represent miraculously untransformed, a stillness that is the past, indispensable but eternally indisposed. Instead, Grosz values a concept of the past as continually reinterpreted through the concerns of the present.³⁰ Queer cultural historian Scott Bravmann shares Grosz’s investment in the furtive ways the present constructs the past, applying the concept to the study of queer history in his book *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture and Difference*.³¹ Bravmann looks at the ways “collective forms of historical recollection ... animate the present,” which in turn constructs the past.³¹ The archive is a space for underrepresented communities to work through the construction of their past, historicize their present, and, as cultural theorist Tess L. Takahashi expresses in her article “The Imaginary Archive: Current Practice,” to envision their own possible futures.³² This formative process is manifested through CWAHI and Bildwechsel as contemporary researchers contribute to the archives and then draw from them, producing, respectively, scholarly works or curated video screenings. Each new work or screening reinterprets the archived information to make the past significant to the present. The past is made visceral through the archive. It becomes a vehicle in and of itself. It is not a relic to be catalogued, diagnosed and explained, but an active presence in the present, surfacing at the call of contemporary desires to build feminist art history. Borrowing from feminist theorist Luce Irigaray, Grosz frames the past, reconfigured in the present and launched into the future as the notion of the future anterior. The grammatical form of the future anterior, “this will have been” lends itself as a metaphor for self-determined

30 Grosz 1019.

31 Bravmann 4.

32 Tess L. Takahashi, “The Imaginary Archive,” *Camera Obscura*, 22.66 (September 2007): 179.

histories and the archives of the marginalized. It describes a present that is to be reinterpreted, reconfigured, and synthesized by future archivists according to their own priorities, just as we interpret the past and consolidate histories according to strategic categories that hold import today.

Situated knowledge as a basis for the production of histories of the marginalized is more than an available strategy - it is a necessity. As Matt Richardson states in *Our Stories Have Never Been Told: Preliminary Thoughts on Black Lesbian Cultural Production as Historiography in "The Watermelon Woman,"* it is often up to those whose identities have been subject to erasure from history to "carve out space for their own versions of the past."³³ To this, I add that communities who do not see themselves reflected in existing historical narratives also take it upon themselves to historicize their present. Social bonds and community identities are characterized by impermanence.³⁴ In order to sustain a social network and extend it into the future, humans must collaborate constantly to trace and record the shared experiences, events, and emotions that constitute those bonds for moments in time. In doing so they project those moments into the future so that others may find themselves reflected therein. Searching for widely communicable markers of identity, marginalized communities rely on personal narratives to sustain social bonds. The archive, an active and dynamic collection of narratives, participates in the constant re-articulation of those bonds across generations. Scholars, artists, and activists have employed various strategies to criticize and work against misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, and racist historical exclusivity. Despite the rigidity of its traditional and

33 Richardson 100.

34 Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 54.

institutional incarnations, the archives, as I argue in this thesis, can be particularly useful for the writing of histories of marginalized artists, as their very structure also invites the non-linear, ever-expanding, and permanently partial histories that counter the dominant narrative in form and in content.³⁵

In the interest of favouring situated histories, I wish to begin by setting out my particular interest in both CWAHI and Bildwechsel, which is rooted in my personal investment in each project. In 2008 I was introduced to Bildwechsel through my involvement in queer feminist organizing and experimental videomaking in Warsaw, Poland. I attended screenings and hosted Bildwechsel Berlin archivist Eva Keitzmann several times as she became increasingly involved in the Warsaw queer DIY (do-it-yourself) video scene. DIY ethics inform ways of working that stem from a long history of radical, counter cultural production traditionally associated with punk rock, independent publishing, and low budget filmmaking.³⁶ A large portion of Bildwechsel's collection, which now includes my own work, represents this tradition. It was not long before my friend and long-time anarchafeminist and punk community organizer Jenni Ramme engaged Keitzmann in building the Warsaw branch of Bildwechsel. As I learned about Bildwechsel's connection to the German women's media movement³⁷ and its methods of working outside mainstream film history, I began to wonder about the project's possible historiographical, as well as political and ideological, connection to

35 Haraway (1988) 54.

36 For a discussion on DIY ethics and aesthetics in European contexts opposed to the dominance of Hollywood standards see Shohini Chaudhuri, "Dogma Brothers: Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg," *New Punk Cinema*, ed. Nicholas Rombes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) 157-161.

37 Throughout the 1970s German women filmmakers and media workers formed various initiatives to increase the visibility of their work. Julia Night, *Women and the New German Cinema* (London: Verso, 1992) 102.

CWAHI. Prior to my departure for Warsaw in 2007, I had been living in Montreal, where Dr. Janice Anderson - my professor at the time - introduced me to CWAHI. The project had recently secured a space within Concordia University's Digital Image and Slide Collection, then the "slide library," where Anderson is the Visual Resources Curator. I began working for CWAHI as a researcher in 2009. It was then that my understanding of the connection between the two projects began to take shape.

The differences between the two are immediately apparent. Bildwechsel is completely extra-institutional and volunteer-run, while CWAHI navigates the spaces of a university, obtaining funding from Concordia as well as the government of Canada in order to pay its researchers. Founding Bildwechsel archivist durbahn is adamant about the decision to work without government funding.³⁸ I value the commitment to this decision, as it reflects the anarchafeminist and radical queer politics central to many of Bildwechsel's collaborating communities. Government funding programs require the implementation of hierarchal job structures and control systems antithetical to the anarchafeminist commitment to free association and collective approaches to organizing.³⁹ On the other hand, I also value CWAHI's commitment to paying researchers, the majority of whom are women, for their work.⁴⁰ These differences in structure and milieu are a lesson in conceptualizing the course of feminist historiography not as a singular whole, but as a series of intersecting and often disparate practices. The creation of new models to combat the erasure and exclusion of women from the history

38 durbahn, interview by author, Hamburg, 15 July 2010.

39 durbahn, 15 July 2010.

40 Though CWAHI does not have an explicitly women and trans oriented hiring policy, the research teams have to date been predominantly made up of women. As a transgender person I have found CWAHI to be a sensitive and comfortable environment.

of art necessarily takes many forms. Notably, the proliferation of feminist histories includes galleries with mandates to privilege the work of women, such as Montreal's La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse founded in 1974; women's film and video distribution networks like Bildwechsel and the similar, Montreal-based Groupe Intervention Vidéo; as well as university courses designed around feminism and art history, such as the survey course offered annually at Concordia. The archival form has itself taken divergent directions to bring into representation a vast variety of feminist and women's creative practices. CWAHI and Bildwechsel represent two archival modes, diverse in scope yet alike in their historiographical shape and political aim.

In the following two chapters I present the archival structures of CWAHI and Bildwechsel respectively. My methodology is based on the interpretation of visual works created by CWAHI and Bildwechsel contributors, detailing the ways they interpret and experience each archive. *In the Museum* (2008), a short video created by founding Bildwechsel archivist durbahn, takes viewers through the organization's Hamburg archive.⁴¹ Upon my request, CWAHI's three founders and three of the initiative's research assistants drew cognitive maps illustrating the spaces of CWAHI. The armatures of each project according to the personal experiences and thoughts of those who made them are

41 The use of cognitive mapping did not have the same success with Bildwechsel as it did with CWAHI. Most of the Bildwechsel interviewees simply did not have the time to undertake a project they felt would require a great deal of reflection on many years of community building. The many years of personal connection most archivists have experienced with the Bildwechsel project creates an emotionally charged space not readily offered up to illustration. As Bildwechsel Glasgow archivist Kate Henderson reflects, "the reason (Bildwechsel) works is that we don't try to understand it." Here Henderson refers not to the clear political mandate of the archive, but rather its emotional spaces. While my situated analysis of the project in this thesis may seem antithetical to Henderson's perspective, I see my perspective here as one in an ever shifting sphere of thought around the project. Henderson does not mean that the archivists are reluctant to discuss the mechanisms of Bildwechsel on forum, but that they hesitate to crystallize their thoughts in the form of a drawing. It is for this reason that I have chosen to focus on the moving image here, an analytical aid appropriate for a video archive in its dynamism. Kate Henderson, interview by author, 23 March 2011.

illustrated through these images. The cognitive maps of CWAHI and durbahn's video tour of Bildwechsel Hamburg not only depict the physical spaces of each project, but also demonstrate the ways each illustrator or videomaker interacts with the space, how they feel about it, and why each space will be important to future historians, artists, and archivists. While both the maps and the video easily inspire considerations of feminist spatial theory, my focus in this thesis is not solely the analysis of feminist occupation of physical space.⁴² I depart from the physical realities of space to discuss the archival form as a vessel and vehicle for the emotional and conceptual considerations of situated practice of history writing.

The increasing academic focus on archival theory and practice, from Cvetkovich through Halberstam, Pollock, and Bravmann, underscores the urgency of my project. An investigation of archival methodologies and the identification of theoretical approaches reflected in their work establishes a footing for future generations to contribute to situated histories as women, queer, and trans artists and researchers. Groups or individuals deciding how best to structure a historical project will always benefit from the observation of how existing projects function. I hope to encourage readers of this thesis to situate their own work among the many initiatives that aid the writing of queer and feminist counter narratives.

⁴² For a feminist discussion of physical space see Hilde Heynen, *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Chapter 1

Bildwechsel Women+ and Queer Feminisms on Video

Bildwechsel's history began in Hamburg in 1974 with the establishment of a "Medialaden," or "Media Store." The Medialaden was developed in the name of wider accessibility to new media technology. Forged in the shifting circumstances of women media artists working to gain historical ground for their non-traditional work, Bildwechsel's name translates roughly from German to "image shift." Bildwechsel Hamburg, the first and largest archive in the Bildwechsel network, holds a collection of over seven thousand video and multimedia works. Expanded from an initial two hundred works in 1979, the substantial collection is shelved according to date of donation to the archive. Each piece is viewed upon receipt. Familiarizing themselves with the contents of the archive as it is built, archivists provide a short description for each work, entering keywords and comments into a database accessible at the Hamburg space. A large collection of artist files is also held at the Hamburg location. Artists whose video and film works are stored in the archive are invited to provide biographical information, exhibition catalogues, zines, artist books, and documentation of artwork other media. The artists featured by Bildwechsel represent many gender identities encompassed by the term "women+." The continued use of the category "women" honours the project's roots in the German women's media movement of the 1970s,¹ situating the network of archives

1 Bildwechsel was among a variety of projects sparked by the growing influence of feminist politics in Germany throughout the 70s. As the women's movement worked towards improving the lives of German women, those working in film and video production took up the struggle as it pertained to their specific circumstances. The era saw the formation of various women's media collectives and related initiatives. In her book *Women and the New German Cinema*, film and media scholar Julia Knight identifies the Seminar on Women's Films, which took place in Berlin in 1973, as among the first of such projects. In 1979, the inaugural year of Bildwechsel, the Association of Women Filmworkers was also

historically, in a moment when a group of women fought to secure their place in the burgeoning European media arts scene.² Adapted later to “women+,” the category acknowledges the queer and trans identities that, according to Bildwechsel Glasgow archivist Kate Henderson, have always been integral to the communities whose histories are told through the collected works.³

Like performance art, video and film hold a special significance for feminist and women’s art practices due to the largely extra-institutional location of these media throughout the 70s.⁴ Women film and video makers in Germany were searching for ways to learn and develop innovative art practices not widely represented in the mainstream of the art world. Initially not specifically a women’s space, the Hamburg studio was run by artists who negotiated to cheaply purchase equipment from Sony in exchange for hosting training programs to teach people how to shoot and edit video. According to Bildwechsel Hamburg archivist durbahn, the training sessions were held during the day and “the real, important work,” that is, the practice of art, “was done at night.”⁵ When the media group began, they were stocked with film, video, photo, and printing equipment. In 1979 a group of women met in the Medialaden space to discuss the creation of a new women's newspaper. The paper never got off the ground, but the urgency of a media related project prioritizing the works of women sparked the concept of Bildwechsel instead.⁶

As Bildwechsel Berlin archivist Eva Kietzmann points out, “wechsel” has a

created in Hamburg. The Association launched a Manifesto demanding equal representation and training opportunities for women in the field. Knight 113.

2 durbahn, interview by author, Hamburg, 15 July 2010.

3 Kate Henderson, interview by author, 23 March 2011.

4 Karen Henry, “The Trap of Feminism,” *The F Word* (Vancouver: Library and Archives Canada, 2009) 11.

5 durbahn, 15 July 2010.

6 Ibid.

second meaning - that is “exchange.” Keitzmann sees both shift and exchange as integral to Bildwechsel’s mandate, which she expresses “in terms of [a] ‘living archive,’ [that] not only [collects] material, but [works] to reactivate, reinterpret, and finally to re-present it to a public.”⁷ The contents of the archive are in constant movement as members of Bildwechsel actively seek new material while continually reactivating the archive’s historical works. Older works are thematically matched with new ones through curating practices committed to engagement with the ongoing history of marginalized video practices. According to Kate Henderson, many of the works collected by Bildwechsel might otherwise never have seen the light of day.⁸

Video archiving may be a form of collecting uniquely suited to narrate the histories of queer, trans, and women's communities. Bildwechsel holds screenings at venues ranging from the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, to Lodypop artist run centre in Basel, to Elba squat in Warsaw.⁹ While branching into the professional art domain, Bildwechsel remains closely tied to the artists whose work is collected, as well as their communities, many of which share radical queer feminist politics.¹⁰ For this reason, community screenings have always been an integral vehicle for sharing histories narrated through Bildwechsel’s thirty years of collected video. The self-organized archive is a space for self-determined histories.

Bildwechsel does not buy video or copy without permission. They do not gather

7 Eva Keitzmann and Jenni Ramme, “Re: Bildwechsel Research,” Message to author, 31 January 2011.

8 Kate Henderson, 23 March 2011.

9 *Bildwechsel Glasgow: Is feminism still work to do?* CCA, 2009; *Working on it*, Lodypop, Basel, 29 June, 2008; *Klir Szyft: Misja Brunhilda*, Elba Squat, Warsaw, 2008.

10 Broadly focussed on anti-capitalist and anti-oppression activism, radical queer initiatives are where feminist concerns with gender-based oppression meet struggles against racism, homophobia, transphobia, as well as work around prisoner solidarity, HIV/AIDS, and workers’ rights, importantly including the rights of sex workers. Here, the formation of support networks and communities is key.

video from the Internet or television. They collect only directly from artists or through donors. Bildwechsel is “a network of connection,” durbahn told me, adding, “We are ... interested in the people and why they are making work.”¹¹ The archivists situate themselves in the collection process, building relationships as they build the archive. They also seek to learn about the video and filmmakers themselves, situating the artist in relation to the work through artist files.

In addition to the archive and artist files, Bildwechsel Hamburg has a community centre where various club meetings, workshops, and screenings are held. The space has the feel of a living room with couches and chairs comfortably set up next to large windows. (Fig. 1) In her book *An Archive of Feelings*, Ann Cvetkovich suggests that a domestic atmosphere aids in creating “an emotional rather than a narrowly intellectual experience” in an archival space.¹² This experience is particularly important for archival projects addressing the needs of communities with a history of being silenced. By welcoming community life into its spaces, Bildwechsel makes room for the emotions produced through the creation of highly personal histories marked by struggles against oppression.¹³

The Bildwechsel space also contains a reading room of printed materials relevant to queer and feminist art historical, community, and political dialogue. Books on queer and feminist theory can be found here along with art magazines and independently

11 Kate Henderson, 23 March 2011.

12 Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Identity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003) 241. Cvetkovich makes this observation in connection to the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which begun in a private New York apartment and maintains a domestic aesthetic fostering intimacy in its new space.

13 Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005) 24; Charles E. Morris, “Archival Queer,” *Rhetorical & Public Affairs*, 9.1 (Spring 2006): 145.

published creative works. (Fig. 2) The room is visually arranged towards the purpose of “performing a library.”¹⁴ The brass candelabra hanging from the ceiling, the pastiche of red carpeting, and the fake fireplace ironically call to mind aesthetics associated with the wealthy libraries of Ivy League universities, or upper class private homes. As though in drag, this room demonstrates Bildwechsel archivists' self-reflexive approach to their engagement with history. The relationship between archive and archivist is illustrated in a short documentary video entitled *In the Museum*, created by durbahn in 2008. The piece takes the viewer through a room at Bildwechsel Hamburg referred to as the video museum, where the bulk of Bildwechsel’s collection is held.

Taken in one, continuous point-of-view shot for the duration of four minutes and fourteen seconds, *In the Museum* functions as a concise map of the archive. To act as legend to durbahn’s map, I use my personal experience working with Bildwechsel as well as interviews with four of its archivists: Hamburg-based founding archivist durbahn, Bildwechsel Glasgow’s Kate Henderson, Bildwechsel Berlin’s Eva Keitzmann, and Bildwechsel Warsaw co-founder Jenni Ramme. The following analysis expands upon the significance of *In the Museum* as its images relate to Bildwechsel’s collecting and archiving methods, curating practices, and community oriented strategies for a self-reflexive engagement with history. *In the Museum* vividly expresses both meanings of *wechsel* - that is, “shift,” as well as “exchange.” The video demonstrates the ways in which Bildwechsel reconfigures the past through the lens of the present. The arch of durbahn’s museum tour structurally reflects the cyclical, non-linear historiographical

14 Kate Henderson, 23 March 2011.

framework favoured by Griselda Pollock and Elizabeth Grosz.¹⁵ The presence of the archivist/videographer herself points to Bildwechsel's emphasis on positional and embodied connections between artists, the collectors of their work, and the communities whose histories are told through the archive and connected video screenings. The foundation of situated knowledge and a dynamic vision of history echoing the form of the future anterior are present in the gestures captured by *durbahn*. As described in the Youtube tagline, the videomaker takes a handheld camera on a "kleiner flug durchs": a short flight through the video museum. Her camera moves swiftly, occasionally stopping to briefly examine certain objects and processes. I have chosen to focus on four particular moments in *durbahn*'s short flight that communicate Bildwechsel's self-conscious deployment of open, mutable strategy as historical aid. In order of appearance, these are an old reel-to-reel video tape recorder (VTR), the shelved archival videos themselves, a video monitor showing a queer romantic moment, and, finally, the process of transferring analogue video to DVD. I now expand upon these elements, situating them within the video while describing their connection to my chosen theoretical framework.

In the Museum begins with a view of one end of the Hamburg space. (Fig. 3) Several metal stacks frame the opening image. They hold thousands of video works spanning three decades of collecting. Daylight floods the centre of the image, coming through the stacks from a window in the distance. The camera begins its movement through the room with a shot of an old format of videotape on a reel-to-reel VTR. The viewer is taken towards the machine as the cameraperson sets the tape into motion,

15 Griselda Pollock, "Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space, and the Archive," *Feminisms is Still Our Name*, eds. Hedlin Hayden & Sjöholm Skrubbe (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) 128; Elizabeth Grosz, "Histories of a Feminist Future," *Signs*, 25.4 (Summer 2000): 1019.

feeding it from one reel to the other, and then pressing rewind. This process has the viewer suspended for a moment in a dizzying, extreme close-up of the machine as the point of view swoops down to hand level. (Fig. 5) The mechanics of rewinding an old video reel are simultaneously revealed and obscured. Easily manoeuvred with one hand, durbahn's contemporary video camera produces its characteristically shaky tight shot as she uses both hands to manipulate the large reel of analogue tape. The viewer is allowed for a brief moment to examine an older generation of the video medium through the particulars of the new generation. The past and present are intermeshed as artistic content moves across generations of video technology. As I elaborate below, video archiving necessitates a cyclical approach to the collecting process, as works must constantly be revisited in order to avoid their loss with the extinction of video platforms.¹⁶

From here the camera continues its short flight, briefly scanning the stacks to alight for small moments on more video equipment, including a very old projector. The videos themselves are surveyed in a whirlwind of close-ups that simultaneously illuminate and obscure the contents of the archive. The names on most of the tapes are impossible to make out, but were the viewer to pause at just the right moment, the name of Swiss filmmaker and performance artist Muda Mathis can be read clearly on a Mini DV tape casing. The double move to reveal and conceal is related to the ways in which the archive itself exists in a paradoxical push-pull between the trappings of a stringent, crystallizing, and at times seemingly clandestine museological system and the transparent and dynamic practices of knowledge production through ever changing situated

16 This aspect of feminist historiography can be mapped directly onto the material processes throughout Bildwechsel history as the archive engaged in the transfer of works on film to video in the 1980s. Knight 119-120.

perspectives. The entirety of *In the Museum* reflects this phenomenon. Soft piano music by Swedish composer Bobo Stenson accompanies the pan of a sunlit room, suggesting calm and openness, while the rattle of old VTR equipment and the erratic flight of the camera suggests the esoteric. Kathy Ferguson suggests that all archives vacillate between the restricted and the accessible.¹⁷ This is manifested through their structure and evident in their history. The system sometimes feels beyond human comprehension, like the one Jorge Luis Borges imagined in *The Library of Babel*, insufficiently though incessantly lit, stocked with “the formless and chaotic,” though perfectly ordered according to a complex and mysterious numerology.¹⁸ Borges’ library is a metaphor for the universe, and a struggle with the universal. The institutional archival form still carries pretensions to the absolute; however, *Bildwechsel* is built outside of institutional walls. The completely volunteer-run organization is mobilized by the strong desire to represent the histories left out of the dominant narrative, keeping them outside of the institutions that remained closed to women for so long.

The next image sequence of interest brings this discussion to queer history in particular. Having scanned the stacks, the camera is transfixed by a television monitor just long enough for viewers to witness the end of a kiss between two figures on the screen. (Fig. 6) The film-within-a-video echoes the theatrical form of the play-within-a-play, a device used to illuminate certain aspects of a plot or put an overarching theme into extended metaphor. *In The Museum’s* film-within-a-video is Claudia Zoller’s *Me and Mrs. Jones* (Super 8, 1994). The filmmaker describes the piece as “a love letter to my

17 Kathy Ferguson, “Theorizing Shiny Things: Archival Labours,” *Theory & Event*, 14:4 (2008): 3-7.

18 Jorge Luis Borges, “The Library of Babel,” in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings* (New York: New Direction, 1962) 52.

Mrs. Jones.”¹⁹ Intensifying our brief encounter with Zoller’s work, *durbahn* zooms in on the monitor as the faces separate slightly and gaze at one another, smiling. A laugh is shared as one of them turns and acknowledges the person filming. The returned gaze of the subject seems unaffected and familiar, giving this brief segment an air of do-it-yourself (d.i.y.) filmmaking where filmmakers often select actors from their own community. These are often lovers and friends. I read both romantic and community intimacy into this film-within-a-video. It is an intimacy mirroring that between archive and archivist. The maker of *In the Museum* is clearly familiar with this archival space and entitled to manipulate its contents. Here the video situates the archivist in her sphere of knowledge, presenting a selection among the videos from her perspective. In this way, *In the Museum* communicates how *Bildwechsel* members consider the personal perspective of each individual archivist to be a crucial element to the research and curatorial practices facilitated through the archive.²⁰ Thus the archive allows for “making history” in a creative, as well as scholarly, way.

Intimacy is also important to Donna Haraway’s discussion of situated knowledges. Haraway insists on an interpretation of knowledge production that emphasizes the human mediation of all knowledge claims and systems.²¹ Situated in their socially marked bodies and working through their experiences, humans produce histories. *Bildwechsel* is itself a system designed according to the politically and personally motivated desires of a group of individuals. *Bildwechsel* archivists understand the works they collect through a sense of shared community and overlapping experience with

19 Claudia Zoller, *Bildwechsel Glasgow*, Web, 15 June 2011, np.

20 Eva Keitzmann and Jenni Ramme, 31 January 2011.

21 Donna Haraway, “Situating Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies*, 14.3 (Autumn, 1988): 583.

artists. While the artist files contextualize work, the archivists themselves have often engaged personally with the video makers and have an intimate knowledge of the collection as a whole.²² Together artist and archivist forge an archive that becomes a text legible to members of their shared communities. According to Jenni Ramme, co-founder of Bildwechsel Warsaw, “Bildwechsel is all about working together on the basis of friendship.” Ramme sees “personal interactions and exchanges” as key to the success of Bildwechsel as a self-organized and non-funded project. The “concrete and meaningful [contact]” between archivists is what makes a project like Bildwechsel possible.²³

Mutable community identity is created through personal investment in the archive. As Judith Halberstam points out in their book *In a Queer Time and Place*, the historicization of artistic subcultures is a collaborative project taken on cooperatively by historians and artists. These roles often overlap,²⁴ as in the case of Bildwechsel. Most of the archivists are themselves creators of moving image artworks. As an artist contributing my own work to Bildwechsel, I observed a kind of participatory collecting, where work is not scouted for its compatibility with certain, preconceived notions of excellence, but rather enters the archive through artists’ initiative and archivists’ interest fostered by community connections. Upon adding their works to the archive, artists contribute their own histories to a community of trans, queer, and women artists connected across time.

Haraway suggests it might take “loving care to learn how to see faithfully from one another’s point of view.”²⁵ It also takes loving care to transmit the perspectives of others. Durbahn’s choice to include Zoller’s “love letter” in her video reads as a gesture

22 Kate Henderson, 23 March 2011.

23 Eva Keitzmann and Jenni Ramme, 31 January 2011.

24 Halberstam 162.

25 Haraway (1988) 583.

of care extended through two onscreen queer lovers. Zoller's work is also particularly evocative of gestures of care extended through Bildwechsel's curating efforts to connect allied queer communities oceans away.

I step outside the explicit narrative of durbahn's video here to delve into a recent moment exemplary of Bildwechsel's role in the wider history of queer moving images. *Me and Mrs. Jones* was recently revisited alongside a solidarity screening of David Wojnarowicz's silent film *A Fire in My Belly* (1986-87), presented by Bildwechsel at the Glasgow Centre for Comporary Arts (CCA) in December 2010. The Smithsonian Institute in Washington had just removed the Wojnarowicz film from the *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture* exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. It was a widely protested act of censorship carried out in part under pressure from members of the House of Representatives John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Eric Cantor (R-VA), accompanied by religiously motivated demands from the Catholic League, who took issue with the artist's image of a crucifix crawling with ants.²⁶ The video itself is a eulogy to Wojnarowicz's friend and fellow artist, Peter Hujar (1934-1987) who died of AIDS-related causes. The artist Kiki Smith, a friend of Wojnarowicz, described his use of ants as "a mysterious stand-in for humanity."²⁷ Haraway's call for loving care in reading the perspectives of others is repeated loud and clear through Bildwechsel's solidarity screening of Wojnarowicz's work. Furthermore, the screening of *Me and Mrs. Jones* alongside *A Fire in My Belly* reframes and re-imagines video history to forge a sense of connection between marginalized queer identities across time and place.

26 Amanda York, "Wojnarowicz, Censorship, and the IMA," *Indianapolis Museum of Art*, Web (December 9, 2010) 15 July 2011, np.

27 Kat Long, "Censorship at the Smithsonian," *The Gay & Lesbian Review* (March-April 2011): 17.

Made just over a decade apart, *Me and Mrs. Jones* and *A Fire in My Belly* were situated together at Bildwechsel among other works ranging in date from 1979 to 2010 in a “programme of feminist, lesbian, and queer music and sound-related videos.”²⁸ This broad thematic grouping of a diverse array of works exemplifies a concern with historicity, understood through shared identity rather than artistic lineage. Bildwechsel’s choice to curate around the theme of sound in solidarity against the censorship of Wojnarowicz’s silent film is powerful. I read it as a reference to the ACT UP slogan “Silence=Death.” ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was begun in New York in 1987 as a “non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS Crisis.”²⁹ *A Fire In My Belly* is a highly personal work by a gay artist mourning the loss of a close companion to AIDS. Bildwechsel’s reframing of the film was one of many such solidarity screenings. The curatorial effort to stand up against the censorship of an artist deeply important to the history of AIDS activism and queer cultural production was also an opportunity to reconfigure and re-present Bildwechsel’s own collected/collective history. In defence of their wider artistic community, Bildwechsel archivists reaffirm the historical status of independent queer, trans, and women artists, demonstrating the ethics of care through solidarity.

Returning to durbahn’s *In the Museum*, I turn to another way in which the video demonstrates intimacy. This is through the camera’s meandering motion through the room, interrupted for brief moments as its operator rewinds a reel of videotape or slides a DVD into its rightful sleeve - durbahn’s next move of interest. The camera finds its way

28 sounds of... film programme, *i love Bildwechsel*, Web, 15 June 2011, np.

29 ACT UP, *AIDS is a Political Crisis*, Web, July 21 2011, np.

from the monitor showing Zoller's film to a table just below where several analogue videos lie coupled with their DVD copies. The archivist gently tucks the next in a succession of discs into the sleeve of its original. (Fig. 7) I cannot help but read tenderness into this moment. This reading is likely triggered through association with the image that halts the flight of the camera just seconds before. Zoller's queer kiss coupled with durbahn's DVD transfers suggests that the latter may itself be in the process of digitization. Thus, the film-within-a-video illuminates the intimacy involved in Bildwechsel's archiving practices, while simultaneously demonstrating the archive's material engagement with the temporal form of the future anterior. Through transfer between media, images cyclically re-enter the temporal sphere of that which *will have been*.

As the archive adapts to suit contemporary technological needs, its contents are revisited in their entirety. The transfer of video images is done in real-time. Each tape must be played through in its entirety as its contents are digitized. As each video appears on a Bildwechsel screen, its recorded experiences transform the space as the work itself undergoes material multiplication. Ramme considers video projection a means to virtually warp time and space. It is as though queers are host to one another across decades and many hundreds of miles. Queer experience is narrated viscerally through video. In her book, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, media theorist and curator Laura U. Marks has developed the concept of "haptic visuality," exploring the means by which video produces a virtual sense of touch through the eye.³⁰ The grainy

³⁰ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) xiii.

close-ups and rapid movement of the camera in works like *In the Museum* produce a distorted video image that evades optical understanding, troubling the sense of mastery through the disembodied gaze. Durbahn's at times shaky point-of-view shot is the perfect example of a way to feel one's way through the perspective of another. In watching the video, the viewer must move along with the videomaker, perceiving the moments of slight hesitation when the camera suddenly changes direction as it races along the stacks and sensing her succession of movements as developed intuitively from her embodied understanding of the archive. Haptic visuality aligns itself with situated knowledges. Haraway "[insists] on the embodied nature of all vision."³¹ As demonstrated through *In the Museum*, the sense of sight is inflected through deep association with the body and its movements. Vision is conceptually turned inward, its presence inextricable from the marked body of the videomaker. Durbahn's gaze does not come "from nowhere."³² Furthermore, viewers are moved to associate the cameraperson's choices with their own immediate framings of themselves. Close-ups of queer faces are emblazoned in resonance with communities of queer viewers. The two faces in Zoller's film, reframed through *In the Museum*, are a powerful image for the production of emotion and the visceral resonance of Bildwechsel's video history. Queer, trans, and women artists so often represent their own bodies. Given that representation is often used to marginalize, reduce, and criminalize these very bodies, self representation is a powerful, often political act. Through video, queer, trans, and women artists take control of their own image. They project themselves into the future as entities with agency, whose images will be passed

31 Haraway (1988) 581.

32 Ibid.

along through generations, projecting not only faces and gazes, but also the movements of bodies into the future.

By the end of *In the Museum*, the camera has travelled one hundred and eighty degrees to leave the viewer looking out at the other end of the archive. The sun blasts a highlight through the curtained window beyond the familiar metal stacks. It is a twin to the opening image. (Fig. 4) The cyclical narrative of *In the Museum* relates to the model of history proposed in feminist and queer scholarship to overcome the linearity of progress oriented master narratives.³³ The final frame is strikingly similar but not identical to the opening image. I identify herein a metaphor for the constantly shifting though steadily cyclical, vision of history. *In the Museum* represents the past reconfigured in the present and projected into a future where new interpretive lenses will examine both the past work itself and, through the use of archival documents, its many presences and significations built up along the way through screenings and writings such as this one. My study of Bildwechsel, as well as CWAHI, contributes to the ever expanding, ever fluctuating body of divergent, situated knowledges and creative practices that constitutes feminism itself.³⁴

33 Grosz 1018-109; Bravmann 4; Halberstam 2.

34 Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987) 238; Pollock (2010) 125.

Chapter 2

CWAHI and the Reconfiguration of Art Historical Narrative

The Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI) began in Montreal, Canada in 2005 when Concordia University visual arts librarian Melinda Reinhart proposed the creation of an online bio-bibliographical database focused on historical women artists in Canada.¹ Janice Anderson, Visual Resources Curator at Concordia's Digital Images and Slide Collection joined the project, as did Kristina Huneault, Research Chair at Concordia in the Department of Art History. CWAHI's current mandate is twofold. It encompasses the promotion of research focused on historical women artists in the Canadian context and the promulgation of information about these artists via two online databases. One of these is a collection of biographical data; the other is Canadian Exhibition Reviews Online (CERO), a collection of digitized newspaper and journal articles linked to artists featured in the biographical database.² The physical space of CWAHI consists of a small room within Concordia University's Digital Image and Slide Collection (DISC), located in Concordia's downtown campus. This site is where hard copies of artist data are filed and research is conducted. CWAHI's collection consists of data on women artists working in Canada who were born before 1920, and architects born before 1965. Other Canadian collections of documentation already exist for contemporary artists who are women working in Canada. *Artexte* in Montreal and the

1 Founder A, interview by author, 25 January 2010. All but one of my interviewees asked not to be identified by name, so to avoid the imbalance in narrative I have chosen to keep them all anonymous. Letters A, B, and C designate the three CWAHI founders, while D, E, and F refer to the three researchers.

2 *About the Canadian Women Artists History Initiative*, Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, 10 June 2010, Web, 15 June 2011.

Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) in Toronto are two notable examples.³ There is no overlap between these collections and that of the CWAHI, whose dates of focus reflect a void in the Canadian art historical terrain. According to founder A, the “historical records [collected by CWAHI] don't exist anywhere [else] in any coherent form.”⁴

A significant body of feminist art historical scholarship identifies and investigates the exclusivity of the art historical canon. In her book *Differencing the Canon*, Griselda Pollock identifies the early 1990s as the period feminist art historians began to explicitly voice a critique of the canon. This critique had previously existed “[implicitly] in all feminist interrogations of art history.”⁵ Identifying early feminist work on dismantling the canon, Pollock points to a panel organized by Linda Nochlin in New York entitled “Firing the Canon” (1990), as well as Nanette Salomon's essay interrogating authoritative art historical texts, “The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission” (1991).⁶ In her dissertation, “Creating Room: Canadian women's mural painting and rereadings of the public and the private,” Janice Anderson discusses the mechanisms of canonization in the Canadian art historical context. In the production of a definitively Canadian artistic sensibility by critics throughout the early twentieth century, the Group of Seven were singled out as exemplary of excellence in the expression of a “Canadianness” constructed with the active exclusion of women. As Anderson explains, quintessential Canadian artistic identity was configured around the understanding of and rugged interaction with nature, a

3 Founder A, 25 January 2010. Artexte is a research centre devoted to contemporary art practice with a focus on the Quebec and Canadian contexts with an extended collection of relevant publications. www.artexte.ca; Begun in 1984, WARC is a gallery and Curatorial Research library devoted to the contemporary art practices of women. www.warc.net

4 Ibid.

5 Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon* (London: Routledge, 1999) 5.

6 Ibid.

realm rendered masculine in opposition to the domestically situated construction of femininity.⁷ Such patriarchal notions about art have shaped a demographically narrow canon that continues to influence the ways major art institutions organize their collections. In a more recent text, “Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space, and the Archive,” Pollock wonders why the “immense mountain of evidence that men and women do make art” has not changed curating trends in such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA). Citing the research of Jerry Saltz, who annually calculates an average of less than 5% women artists on display at MoMA, Pollock demonstrates the continuing phenomenon of what she calls the “half-empty museum.”⁸ She characterizes the institutional attention paid to a few female figures, such as Frida Kahlo, as often “sensational ... and token.”⁹ “Cosmetic restitution” in the form of a simple insertion of women into existing canonically oriented systems will not suffice to undo the mark that has been made on women’s history through exclusionary art historical practices.¹⁰ Instead, as Pollock proposes, a temporally cyclical, and positionally diverse feminist concept of the archive that refuses patriarchal linearity must emerge.¹¹ I propose that CWAHI participates in the larger proliferation of specifically focused archival projects that work towards fulfilling this need.

My research into CWAHI began with my own participation in the project, and I want to situate myself as having been a CWAHI employee. When I worked with CWAHI

7 Janice Anderson, “Creating Room: Canadian Women’s Mural Painting and Rereadings of the Public and the Private” (Diss. Concordia University, 2002) 156-158.

8 Griselda Pollock, “Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space, and the Archive,” in *Feminisms is Still Our Name* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) 130.

9 Pollock (1999) 9.

10 Pollock (2010) 119, 132.

11 133.

in the summer of 2009 digitizing reviews for CERO, I became familiar with the physical spaces of the project, unseen by most visitors who access the website or database remotely. In the course of this experience I was attuned to the emotional and psychic spaces that, as I argue, propel the project forward. As I am writing about a project in which I have been involved, my account is not that of a disembodied analyst; rather, I seek objectivity through the transparent discussion of my involvement with CWAHI, presenting a partial perspective. Interviews with six members of CWAHI, whose perspectives are equally if not more invested and partial than my own constitute the evidence about CWAHI presented in this chapter. I invited three founders, as well as three research assistants to describe the way they view the project. In addition to our conversations, each interviewee drew a cognitive map of CWAHI. I chose maps as my research tool instead of photographs, as my analysis revolves around the situated knowledges produced through the emotional and conceptual spaces of CWAHI. The act of drawing provides a powerful alternative to photography in its facility to provoke memory and evoke feeling.¹² Furthermore, the presence of mediated, personal perspective is undeniably present in a drawing, especially one created from memory.¹³ The drawings of CWAHI are a uniquely evocative conceptual aid. They shape my analysis of CWAHI as a manifestation of situated knowledge and the structure of the future anterior, in their very form reinforcing the potency of situated authorship.

Cognitive mapping is a method of creative visioning that represents space through the interplay of memory and concept. Mapmakers situate themselves in spaces with

12 Ann Cvetkovich "Drawing the Archive in Alison Bechdel's Fun Home," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 36: 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 120.

13 Cvetkovich (2008) 114.

which they are familiar to varying degrees. They represent visually what it is to move through those spaces, accessing body memory and spatial sense to delineate rooms, roads, and furnishings. Moving beyond a physical representation of the space, cognitive geographers may choose to conceptualize certain aspects of their experience in a given place. In the maps that follow, points of social connection appear as dotted lines, while overlapping orbs represent spheres of thought. For architectural historian Dolores Hayden, “cognitive mapping is a tool for discovering fuller territorial information about contemporary populations.”¹⁴ This is true of research scenarios dealing, as Hayden does, with the physical urban landscape. For my purposes, I extend the notion of territory into the realm of history. The maps made by CWAHI workers situate their visions, interests, and experiences within the physical and virtual spaces of the project itself, as well as its larger art historical milieu. Cognitive mapping has allowed my interviewees to represent what may be difficult to express in words alone. In drawing the maps, they participate in the analytical portion of my work on CWAHI as an archive.

Initially, I predicted that the cognitive maps would serve to shape my understanding around an archival space that is both affective and reflective in relation to the political and art historical goals of CWAHI. It turns out that the mapmaking process itself has a considerable affective force. I notice that in drawing the maps, those who traverse and care for the spaces of CWAHI saw their conceptual frameworks taking shape. The drawing process often spurred deeper reflection and triggered new layers of meaning through illustrated metaphor. It was seldom without hesitation that a map was

¹⁴ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) 27.

begun. Some complained of a lack of artistic ability, while others struggled to free themselves of the reflex to represent space literally. While the representation of a physical space was important to most, each illustrator also felt it important to express more abstractly the concepts associated with CWAHI. There was a general notion that the maps should do aesthetic and conceptual justice to a project that honours the contributions of women artists previously marginalized within Canadian art history. The maps reflect the illustrators' own conceptual frameworks. Most contain cyclical, weblike imagery, reflecting the nonlinear structures of feminist historiography proposed by Griselda Pollock.¹⁵

Situated within the university structure and reliant on funding from the Canadian government, CWAHI seeks ways to reconfigure the institutional structures to suit its particular perspective. In my interview with CWAHI founder A, she explained that in her view, “the goal of CWAHI is for it to no longer have to exist.”¹⁶ This statement expresses the conviction that, alongside the proliferation of projects created to repair historical rifts, real changes are being made in the wider social structures that produce exclusionary historical practice. As we talked I reflected on my own work as a CWAHI researcher and began to realize the paradox underlying the project. Working to carve out a separate space for women's art history, CWAHI works to fill a void in Canadian art history left by sexist tactics of separation employed by past art historians. Through my work at CWAHI I learned that as of 1879, the inaugural year of the Royal Canadian Academy's annual exhibition, women were showing their work alongside men. There was no separation by

¹⁵ Pollock (2010) 128-129.

¹⁶ Founder A, interview by author, 25 January 2010.

gender in the exhibition space. It was in certain newspaper reviews that women were listed separately. Women artists did not get nearly as much attention in the press as the men did, but the amount of press they did get is astounding when we consider how little mind was paid to them in the scholarly milieu.¹⁷

The CWAHI research process has revealed several layers of historical exclusion. As researchers work against sexist history, a racial and ethnic imbalance has appeared among the women whose biographies are compiled in the CWAHI database. The information most readily available to researchers has been predominantly on women of European descent. The inclusion of First Nations and Inuit women has been on the CWAHI table from the beginning; however, it was not until 2010 that the project began to focus explicitly on Indigenous women artists. The explicit focus is necessary as broad research under the category “women” often produces Eurocentric results due to existing patterns of exclusion. In order to avoid replicating racist, colonial exclusion as they historicize women artists in Canada, CWAHI has begun to treat histories of Indigenous women with increased rigour. As the fledgling project continues to expand its scope, I would suggest that the histories of past non-European immigrant women artists await similar increase in focus.

My analysis of A’s map of the physical and symbolic spaces of CWAHI will show how this drawing represents the ideal of recuperation through separate history, as well as the project’s relationship to situated knowledge. (Fig. 8) Both the physical and virtual spaces of CWAHI appear on her map, abstracted to varying degrees. Two rectangles

¹⁷ *Canadian Exhibition Reviews Online Database*, Canadian Women Artists History Initiative, Web, 15 June 2011. An example is a review of the Royal Canadian Academy’s 1879 exhibition, which opening with a focus on Charlotte Schreiber. "The Art Exhibition. The Paintings and the Painters," *Toronto Daily Mail* (May 19, 1879) 4.

depict, respectively, the documentation centre and a table just outside, where CWAHI meetings are held. Interestingly, A does not include her own office, nor does she include any names on the map. Instead of direct representations of CWAHI founders, and contributors, chairs where contributing researchers sat and will sit again have been placed around the table. (Fig. 9) Despite her position as one of CWAHI's founders as well as employer to the aforementioned contributors, A omits any representation of power structures. The larger institutional context of Concordia is also left out. Other concerns take precedence on this map, and these are reflected in the shapes drawn in violet and orange.

Geometric symbolism was immediately important to A who stated as she drew that, while the conceptual aspects of the CWAHI project might be represented as a Venn diagram,¹⁸ She was “reluctant to draw ovals that are closed, even if they overlap.” Instead, contributor A represents CWAHI as a series of “formulated, but unfixed ideas.” As more and more of these pockets appeared on her map, A explained that some represented concepts, while others stood for groups of students, online resources, and physical spaces. All of the pockets of experience and cognition are somehow intertwined; none stand alone. A expressed the hope that the space of CWAHI, “not just the physical space, but also the psychological, emotional, and psychic space, is actually a creation of a different way of thinking about the interactions between people.” She was referring specifically to ways of working that are not based on a top-down model, favouring

¹⁸ Introduced in 1880 by logician and philosopher John Venn, this diagram consists of a series of overlapping circles, each encompassing items grouped together categorically. Items placed in the areas where the circles overlap belong in multiple categories. John Venn, “On the Diagrammatic and Mechanical Representation of Propositions and Reasonings,” *Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*, 10.59 (July 1880): 1-18.

instead a horizontal structure where groups of people can work together without fear. While a hierarchy within CWAHI exists on paper, the daily interactions between employees and employers function according to this map, “more as a free exchange of ideas among equals.”¹⁹

A’s map illustrates the understanding of alternative history in terms of a reconfiguration of institutional space. Turning workplace into a dwelling, the caretakers of CWAHI’s artist files work to foster belonging as they occupy a space within the university. This can be seen in an atmosphere that welcomes open dialogue and overlapping ideas. Based on my professional experience as a CWAHI employee, I can assert that a working day at CWAHI shapes the art historical project directly, not only through the accumulation and synthesis of research material, but also through the embodied sense of knowledge production that comes from the acknowledgement of the humans that participate in the research process.

Formed through creative visioning, the conceptual shapes of feminist politics are marked by emotional states and desires for belonging and meaningful engagement with others. Real, felt, and affective, these shapes are forged in physical surroundings. In turn, the ways in which the spaces of feminist projects are organized reflect, however subtly, the guiding principles that inform their political and historiographical strategies. Intertwining ideals and an integrated, co-operative working environment are central to A’s vision of CWAHI and come through in the open shapes on her map. As she revealed to me in our interview, A does not dream of a future where we will all be truly equal and evenly represented in a single canon. Fusing more histories into the epic truth claims of

¹⁹ Founder A, 25 January 2010.

dominant narratives would change nothing in the way of visibility for marginalized artists.²⁰ A convergence of all of the multiplicity of possible streams is not only unfeasible, but also undesirable.²¹ Her map has helped me see that A's wish for CWAHI to one day “no longer have to exist” is not about a re-integration into the canon.²² It is about building a narrative that contributes to the changing shape of art history altogether.

While A's map illustrates the ways in which CWAHI stands out against its institutional backdrop, others focus on the contradiction inherent in pursuing women's histories within the dominant framework. The consideration of this contradiction in relation to CWAHI's reconfiguration of dominant frameworks leads me to the cognitive maps drawn by CWAHI founder B, and researchers D and E. (Figs. 10, 11, 12) In our interview, B discussed CWAHI's intersections with institutional art history. B, D, and E each drew a map reflecting the project's reliance on traditional historical methodology, alphabetically organized by artist according to what Pollock calls “the biographical imperative,” as well as the dominant socio-political categories of gender and nation.²³ I will now consider these three maps of CWAHI to illustrate that, while the partial perspective reconfigures space within the shell of the dominant narrative, some features are strategically maintained.

Three pillars are central to B's map, each representing one aspect of the archive. Her initial drawing featured Doric, Iambic, and Corinthian columns. She abandoned this version with a smile. A bit of humour from B illustrates one way in which prescriptive architectures of the past creep into feminist conceptual designs. I take this cognitive

20 Pollock (2010) 132.

21 Jones 18.

22 Founder A, 25 January 2010.

23 Pollock (2010) 115.

mapping moment as metaphor for the ways CWAHI borrows from dominant models of Western art history. B pointed out examples of these in our interview with a desire, as she put it, to “articulate the reality of the pitfalls” of the project. The artist files are organized alphabetically by name. As B points out, this system has a major drawback related to the structural exclusion of marginalized artists whose names are lost, not easily accessible, or may never have been recorded. This issue is of particular significance within the Canadian context when it comes to Inuit and First Nations artists. CWAHI has inherited the biographical name system from traditional Western art history, despite the fact that it is, as B states, “methodologically retrograde if you want to include Indigenous women artists.”²⁴ The fact that names of Inuit and First Nations women have been more difficult to find reveals mechanisms of exclusion and complicates the base biographical armature of the CWAHI project.

The idea of a Canadian context is in itself problematic. Dominant historical narrative consistently maps space, place, and belonging in terms of nation. In her essay “Beyond National or International: Art and Identity in Formerly Colonial Countries,” art historian Kristina Huneault confronts the problem, citing the scholarship of Alison Stone who rethinks the category “women” (another guiding criterion of CWAHI), perceiving the category not as a descriptor of persons, but rather as a genealogical designator referring to shared experience and historical circumstances. This strategic conception echoes Bildwechsel’s choice to continue using the term “women” while acknowledging that not all of its contributors identify as such. Huneault sees similar potential in the concept of nation, recuperating it from the nationalistic framing by acknowledging

²⁴ Founder B, 27 January 2010.

Canada's colonial history while reaffirming the importance of the category as a strategic marker of belonging.²⁵ The reconfiguration of the concept of nation from a set of rigid boundaries to a series of shared circumstances resonates with the kind of creative geometric visioning B illustrates in her map. The structure of CWAHI itself as a project represents points of view that are critical of the system within which it operates, while making use of that system in order to move forward.

Researcher D focused on her everyday experiences working on the CERO for the CWAHI. Her map depicts the space of the Digital Images and Slide Collection. Within this outer rectangle, the documentation centre is depicted as a stylized rectangle in approximation to its actual layout in the space. (Fig. 11) The rounded rectangular rooms are inhabited by rough circular representations of CWAHI researchers. Six circles represent the CWAHI founders and contract researchers. D connects them with “lines of support and communication,” which form a simple web on the page.²⁶ The simple drawing is a pointed metaphor for D's overall impression of CWAHI.

“I'm such a linear thinker,” D mused as she began to draw.²⁷ It was going to be a conceptual map, but nonetheless one that spoke plainly. The outline describing the space of the university is a rigid rectangle. Its right angles represent a system “structured on a traditional and ingrained concept” of knowledge.²⁸ Housed within this rigid system, the spaces of CWAHI are represented differently. “CWAHI as a concept has softer corners,” D explains. Her map is a metaphor for the oppositional pull of two intertwined ways of

25 Kristina Hunealt, “Beyond National or International: Art and Identity in Formerly Colonial Countries,” *Acta Historiae* 49 (2008): 101.

26 CWAHI Researcher D, 24 February 2010.

27 CWAHI Researcher D, interview by author, 24 February 2010.

28 CWAHI Researcher D, 24 February 2010.

working. The field of the university is contained within right angles. The shapes depicting CWAHI are intended to be slightly more ambiguous in structure, although still reliant on the rectangularity with which D represents systems built on what she calls “traditional and ingrained concepts.” Here, the rigidity of the rectangular form meets the fluidity of web-like connections between the individuals represented.

In “Theorizing Shiny Things,” Kathy Ferguson identifies this precise duality in the very nature of the archive. She takes into account the archive’s polar potentiality, describing a free, transformative flow of information balanced by a drive to order and thereby, conservative. Ferguson troubles philosopher Jacques Derrida’s grim vision of the archive as a prescriptive, prohibitive, and centralized storehouse of institutional memory, asking what an archive might be when people who identify with marginalized histories begin to take up such a project. She frames archives within the paradox identified by CWAHI founders and researchers. “They do both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic work.”²⁹ CWAHI spurs the remembrance of neglected histories, but risks temporary forgetting because of the organization’s early focus on women who showed in galleries, had formal training, and maintained a public, artistic practice - in other words, white, affluent women. While propelling a reconfiguration of art historical thought away from canonical genius worship to more accountable scholarship, the project repeats the structures of the former through its use of alphabetical, biographically based cataloguing.

As Researcher E began drawing her map, she emphasized the free flow of creative collaboration between CWAHI’s founders and research assistants; however, as she completed the drawing, she realized how rigidly structured CWAHI had begun to seem.

²⁹ Ferguson 4.

(Fig. 12) E's map represents the functioning of the archive in great detail. The overarching narrative of CWAHI is inscribed onto this map through a series of connecting lines as well as written thoughts. The human actors mobilizing the project are shown as a scattered collection of circles - red to represent the researchers employed by CWAHI, and purple to represent the initiative's three founders. Solid lines bending at right angles represent the movement of information by researchers between the physical spaces of the CWAHI. The map also shows the movement of photocopied documents from the National Gallery to the slide library, the retrieval of microfilmed newspaper articles from the library, and the movement of files to the homes or other workspaces of researchers who then input the data for web access.

On the whole, this map reads as an interplay of strict order and freeform flow. As she drew, E realized that while CWAHI operates as a series of collaborative efforts, it is subject to the formal trappings of Canadian academic and economic systems. The employment structure is one that cannot be overlooked. The top of E's map reads "money \$?" The question of funding is raised in representation. This zone of the map radiates with long sweeping, delicately inscribed lines that touch several of the red circle researchers. As I learned in conversation with a CWAHI founder, the funding bodies have a hand in determining the operational structure of the initiative. Some of the CWAHI'S funders require grant recipients to outline a hierarchal job structure, which exists on paper but does not necessarily represent the ideal working environment as far as both founders and researchers are concerned.

Despite its strategic employment of traditional archival formats and conformity to

the requirements of institutional funding systems, it is worth considering that the paradoxical behaviour of the archive remains generative and transformative so long as the project itself continues to transform. The strategic use of paper hierarchy for access to grants is surely not all bad. The exclusion of non-white women is a problem slowly being remedied in the recently initiated and already fruitful search for information on historical First Nations and Inuit women artists. As for the question of overall structure, “archives bring order to flows.”³⁰ CWAHI feeds on the flow of participatory research and scholarship, while maintaining an order within its spaces to ease the access to information. The participatory research model brings me back to B’s map, which illustrates the contributors to CWAHI as constellations clustered around the projects they undertake. (Fig. 13) B’s is not the only map to feature a constellation. Researcher F places herself inside the CWAHI documentation centre where she worked extensively on the Artist Database. The lone speck in the box is visited by three orbs representing Anderson, Huneault, and Reinhart, as well as a constellation of other researchers past, present, and future. (Fig. 14)

The conceptual structure of the constellation is one recognized within queer and feminist theory, especially with regard to history and perceptions of temporality. In an interview with Nina Schulz in part exploring the “spatial and temporal presuppositions of some of our progressive narratives,” feminist theorist Judith Butler states, “if our 'modernity' is to have any meaning at all, it will have to be conceived as a constellation of convergent and conflicting temporalities.”³¹ Butler is referring to the privilege given in

30 Ferguson 7.

31 Nina Schulz, “A Fractious Constellation: Interview with Judith Butler,” *analyse & kritik* 519 (August, 2007): 12.

dominant Western culture to the trajectory headed from the present into the future, the supposedly linear development we call “progress.” Similarly, trajectories reaching into the past, while filed into a lineage by dominant narratives, would do well to be interpreted as a constellation. A beautiful way to describe groups of people, the constellation is also a powerful metaphor within feminist thought about history.

CWAHI’s relationship to people mirrors its relationship to time and history. The constellation on B’s map forms around a prominent feedback loop, which illustrates the relationship between the “aiding” and the “doing” of scholarship. (Fig. 15) The loop represents the continuous human exchanges that make CWAHI possible. According to B, scholarship is traditionally given primacy over the various systems that support it, such as library sciences. Scholarly projects and their supportive research roles are intertwined within CWAHI.³² Flux and mutual affect are symbolized by the feedback loop - a cooperative effort through which scholars and researchers aid and influence one another as they build an archive to give new shape to histories. B sees CWAHI as primarily oriented around the “things people do,” rather than the spaces they inhabit. The archival dwelling is constantly reconfigured as newcomers, illustrated by B as dotted stars, contribute their perspectives now and in the future. (Fig. 16) The participatory model of scholarship is a key feature of CWAHI, its illustrative feedback loop relating people and the “things people do” to the history they create. Emphasizing dynamism through mutual affect, the feedback loop is also conceptually bound up with a temporal framework of the future anterior, a concept I find best illustrated in the cognitive map drawn by founder C.

Founder C represents the entirety of CWAHI as a centre from which its

³² Founder B, 27 January 2010.

constituent parts and connected bodies emanate. (Fig. 17) Four elements branch out from the CWAHI centre. One branch represents international centres focusing on women artists, a reminder that CWAHI is not alone in its partial perspective, but rather engages in a process of “seeing together” with other initiatives that share its goals.³³ The artist files themselves form another branch. Alternatively labelled “archive,” the files are connected to a third branch representing “past artists.” C is the only interviewee to clearly delineate the space of the past on her map. The final branch represents the “contemporary researchers” who contribute scholarship and information to the project. Both the past artists and contemporary researchers are connected on C's map to the Artist Database. The database and researchers each produce “publications” as offshoots. The map then connects these to the “larger history of Canadian art.” The way the map presents the virtual space of the artist database as a point of connection between the past and present has made me think of both as equally generative and dynamic components that merge to propel knowledge into the future. C's map is a description of CWAHI's temporal entanglement with the future anterior. I read it as a historical feedback loop threading the lives of past artists into the future through the lens of the present. CWAHI reflects what is important to researchers today. Researchers delve into the past to retrieve what could have been forgotten, transforming it into histories that will have been remembered through archival consolidation. The resulting publications compose a history that will not only preserve information on historical women artists for the future, but also mark what was important to today's researchers. Through the synthesis of past history, the contributors to CWAHI write their own. In turn, those who have yet to figure as authors

³³ Haraway (1988) 586.

of histories will likely reinterpret the work of CWAHI to suit their own purposes. We, too, will have been.

Multiple Channels of Feminist Art History: Proliferation As A Conclusion

Having examined the spaces of CWAHI and Bildwechsel through visual works created by those who know them intimately, I conclude that a feminist sense of agency is produced through both projects and represented by the maps and video. A critical approach to dominant art historical narratives is bolstered by the strategic reconfiguration of institutional space on the part of CWAHI, and the maintenance of independent historical realms by Bildwechsel. Self-analysis is also key within both projects. CWAHI and Bildwechsel creators are invested architects of historical models. Changes are already at work as CWAHI embarks on the pursuit of the histories of First Nations and Inuit women artists. With this important facet of the initiative in the works, self-critical positions continue to be demonstrated from within. For instance, CWAHI founder C wonders how historical Indigenous women would feel about their inclusion in an archive of artists circumscribed within the Canadian nationality.¹ Bildwechsel's Kietzmann and Ramme mention the participation of predominantly white archivists in their project. Through travel and outreach they hope this will change. In the meantime they collect works by a wide diversity of artists. Moreover, Bildwechsel's inclusion of a broader array of gender identities is certainly a move away from an exclusivity uncomfortably mimicking that of the dominant narrative. The accountability of CWAHI and Bildwechsel archivists and researchers in the analysis of their projects signifies a possible end to the patriarchal model of disembodied history. The various interpretations of spatial and social concepts illustrated in the cognitive maps of CWAHI's creators

¹ Founder C, interview by author, 11 May 2011.

contributors share in common an insistence on communication between humans and across time. Durbahn's video of the Bildwechsel Hamburg archive suggests intimacy. Attachment and personal investment shape historical projects that oppose the disembodied, all seeing gaze of patriarchal knowledge.

Seeking new ways of inscribing the works of historical women for posterity, CWAHI does not enshrine histories as relics. Instead, the initiative animates the past through the engagement of a network of scholars in dialogue. The process of archiving is itself a conversation. It brings the past into significance for the present and future. The archive is an articulation of and emphasis on histories that had gone largely unnoticed for many years. It is a synthesis of utterances about the work of women and part of a vast and increasingly accessible intellectual space echoing with stories retold.

Bildwechsel is in constant flux. Histories are inscribed cyclically as videos are indexed, left untouched for years, resurfacing according to contemporary relevance. On videotape, thoughts and bodies are projected into the future to be reconfigured with the help of whatever kind of projection technology might come into being. As Donna Haraway suggested in her *Cyborg Manifesto*, technology as an extension of the human body has profound impact on possible futures of feminism.² The Bildwechsel archive is a generative node, its archivists and contributors co-producing meanings through transparent curating and screening practices. The archival materials always return to the shelves where they are left to further collaborative endeavours with future interpreters of the archive.

2 Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 149-182.

A dynamic, positive vision of history is illustrated and set down in metaphor through the movement of durbahn's camera along the Bildwechsel Hamburg stacks. A similar dynamism appears in the maps of CWAHI founder A, who colourfully represents concepts in flux; and researcher C, who connects CWAHI contributors to one another with bold line work to form an explosive constellation. (Figs. 8, 13) It seems as though Pollock's interrogation of the canon and the question of whether or not to discard the dominant models of history or simply reform them has found practical answers in varied ways of working. Illustrative of Haraway's suggested partial perspectives, CWAHI and Bildwechsel move forward as specialized streams of narrative. CWAHI critically engages with the dominant narrative, isolating and filling a large gap in its thread. The structures of the University are reframed strategically to forward the resuscitation of women silenced in historical scholarship. The map drawn by CWAHI researcher D symbolically addresses the strategic manipulation of institutional boundaries into a working environment built on equal exchange. Founder A's notion of CWAHI as, in part, an emotional space acknowledges the care put into the project by a group of founders who have opened their project to a wide network of invested bodies. Emotion and intimacy also figure strongly in the spaces of Bildwechsel. The tenderness of durbahn's video attests to this.

The apparatus of historical production is unique to each project. Moreover, the unique views of founders of and contributors to each project transformed into visual document through cognitive mapping and video have come to represent for me a meta-history with generative potential equal to that of the archives themselves. In order to

productively critique mainstream systems, solutions must be provided. Through CWAHI and Bildwechsel, history is understood not merely as a story illuminating the movement of culture through time, but as a construction actively shaping understandings of culture and thereby propelling it forward according to a set of concepts designating belonging. The illustrations of CWAHI and the video of Bildwechsel have served to locate the projects conceptually. The visual documents provide a strong basis for my understanding of the methods of collecting, cataloguing, and sharing information of each project in relation to the notions of situated knowledges, and the future anterior. The current understandings of these historical models as presented by their creators will form the basis for their reconfiguration in the future.

In recent queer and feminist scholarship, the concern with the future of history is becoming a common thread. Titles like queer theorist and activist Ryan Conrad's *Future of the Past*, and Vicki Callahan's "The Future of the Archive" are examples.³ The urgency of articulating marginalized identities through histories reframed and reformed against oppression is clearly demonstrated by such events as the Smithsonian Institute's recent censorship of *A Fire In My Belly* by late queer artist David Wojnarowicz.⁴ The public response to the scandal was enormous, which is all the more reason to promote the worth of artistic practices outside of the heterosexist canon. With resistance as a goal, it is

3 Ryan Conrad ed., *Future of the Past: Reviving the Queer Archives* (Portland: Moth Press, 2009); Vicki Callahan, "The Future of the Archive: An Interview with Lynn Hershman Leeson," in *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*, ed. Vicki Callahan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010) 384-398; The relationship of public memory to the histories of women is also another important current in recent feminist writing. In her forthcoming book *Architects, Angels, Activists and the City of Bath, 1765-1965: Engaging with Women's Spatial Interventions in Buildings and Landscape.*, Cynthia Hammond discusses how public memory in the form of architectural history can become more inclusive of women.

4 See Chapter One. Amanda York, "Wojnarowicz, Censorship, and the IMA," *Indianapolis Museum of Art*, Web. (December 9, 2010) 15 July 2011; Kat Long, "Censorship at the Smithsonian," *The Gay & Lesbian Review* (March-April 2011).

important to consider a point made by artist Adrian Piper in her article, “The Triple Negation of Coloured Women Artists.” She views the exclusion of decades of work by contemporary women artists of colour by the “Eurocentric artworld” as a “de facto censorship” over which there has not been a protest comparable to that supporting Wojnarowicz, a white male artist.⁵ As CWAHI builds historical data bases devoted to women artists in Canada, its developers work towards eliminating the project’s internal Eurocentrism through increased attention to Inuit and First Nations women artists. Bildwechsel archivists remain similarly committed to challenging exclusivity in their own historical sphere, acknowledging the problem of a predominantly white group of archivists. Bringing CWAHI and Bildwechsel into scholarly dialogue for the first time, this thesis plays its own role in the discourse of ever changing feminisms. The two case studies highlight the need for many different feminist undertakings to work simultaneously though separately towards greater historical agency among women artists. The maintenance of self-criticism regarding internal Eurocentrism will be crucial to both CWAHI and Bildwechsel as they move towards ever greater historical equity.

5 Adrian Piper, “The Triple Negation of Coloured Women Artists,” in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Routledge, 2003) 241-242.

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Appendix A: Figures, Chapter 1



Figure 1. The Bildwechsel Hamburg Community Centre. Image courtesy of durbahn.



Figure 2. The Bildwechsel Hamburg Library, image courtesy of Coral Short.



Figure 3. *In the Museum*. durbahn, 2008. Video still.



Figure 4. *In the Museum*. durbahn, 2008. Video still.



Figure 5. *In the Museum*. durbahn, 2008. Video stills.



Figure 6. *In the Museum*. durbahn, 2008. Video stills.



Figure 7. *In the Museum*. durbahn, 2008. Video stills.

Appendix B: Figures, Chapter 2

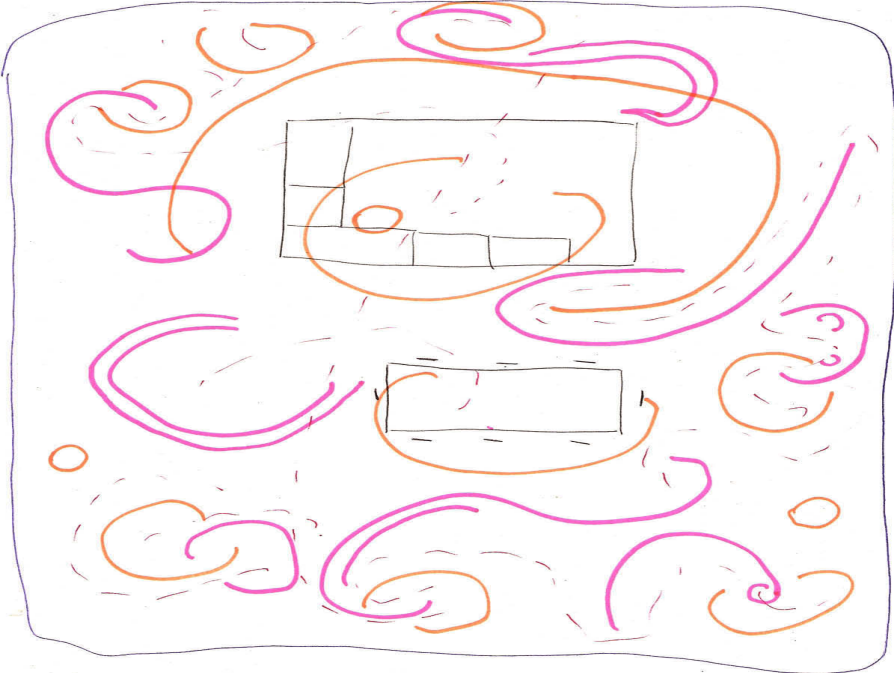


Figure 8. Founder A. CWAHI Cognitive Map. 25 January 2010.

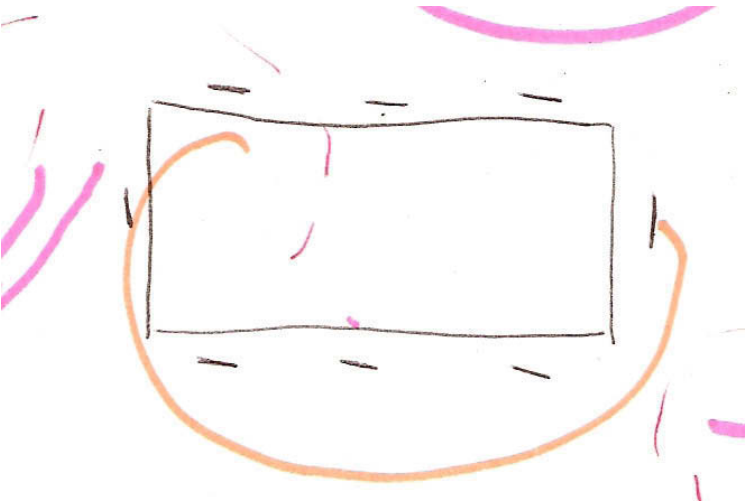


Figure 9. Founder A. CWAHI Cognitive Map, detail.

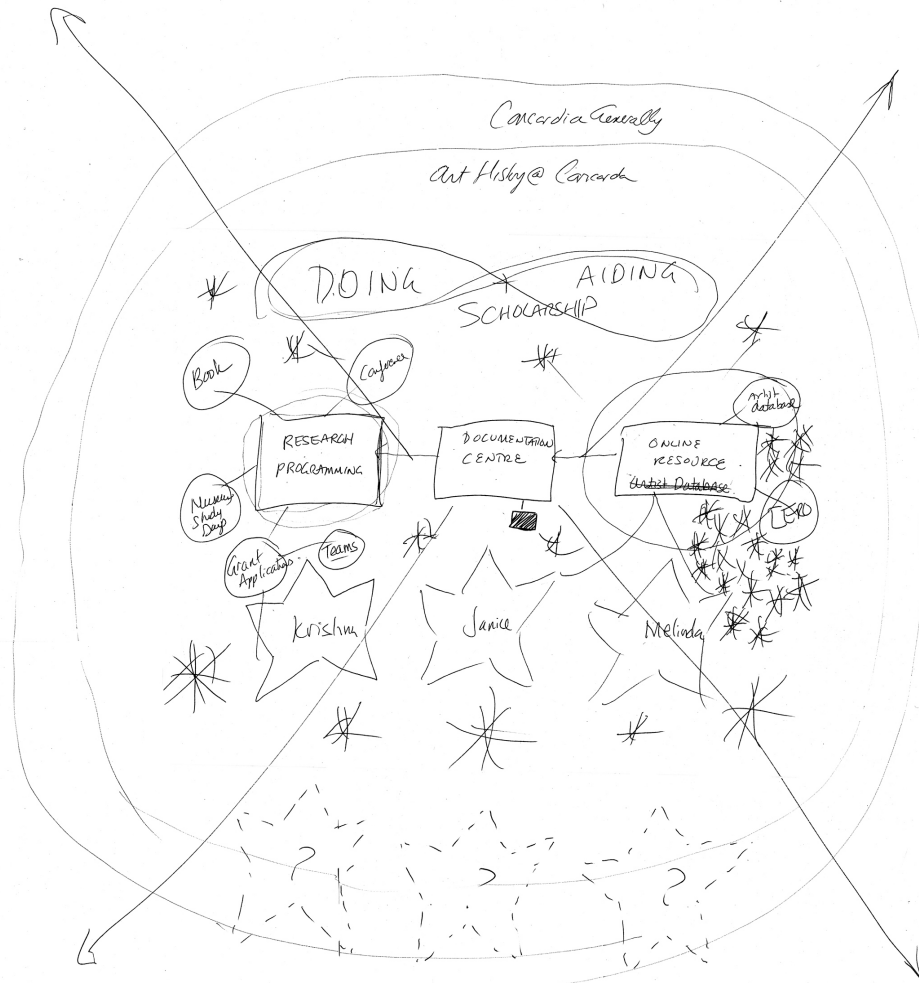


Figure 10. Founder B. CWAHI Cognitive Map. 27 January 2010.

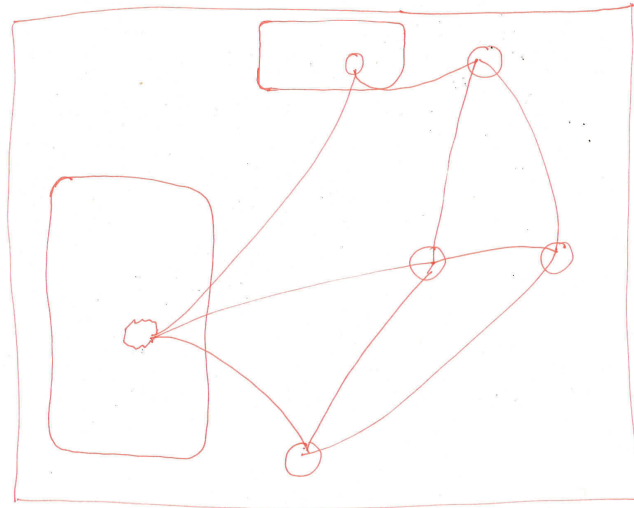


Figure 11. Researcher D, CWAHI Cognitive map, 24 February 2010.

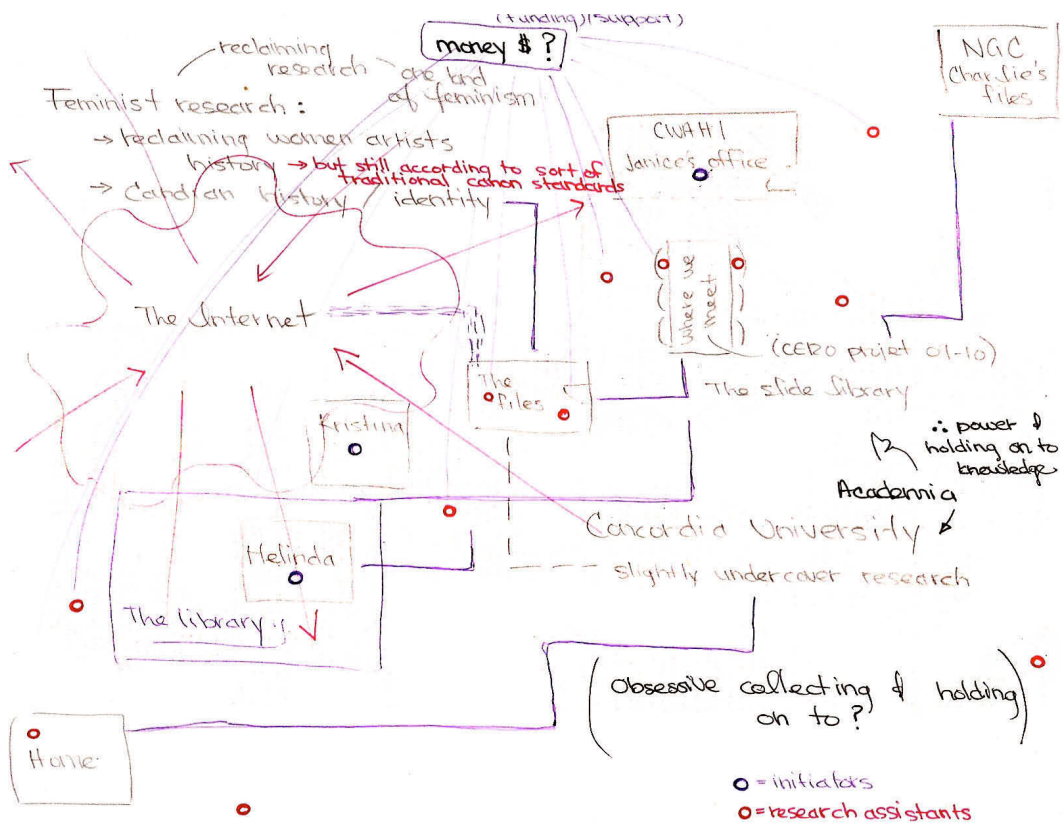


Figure 12. Researcher E. CWAHI Cognitive Map. 16 June 2010.

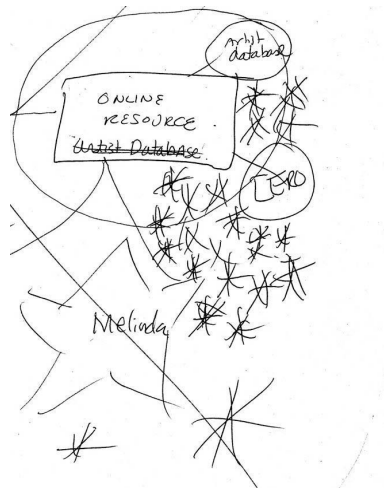


Figure 13. Founder B, CWAHI Cognitive Map. Detail.

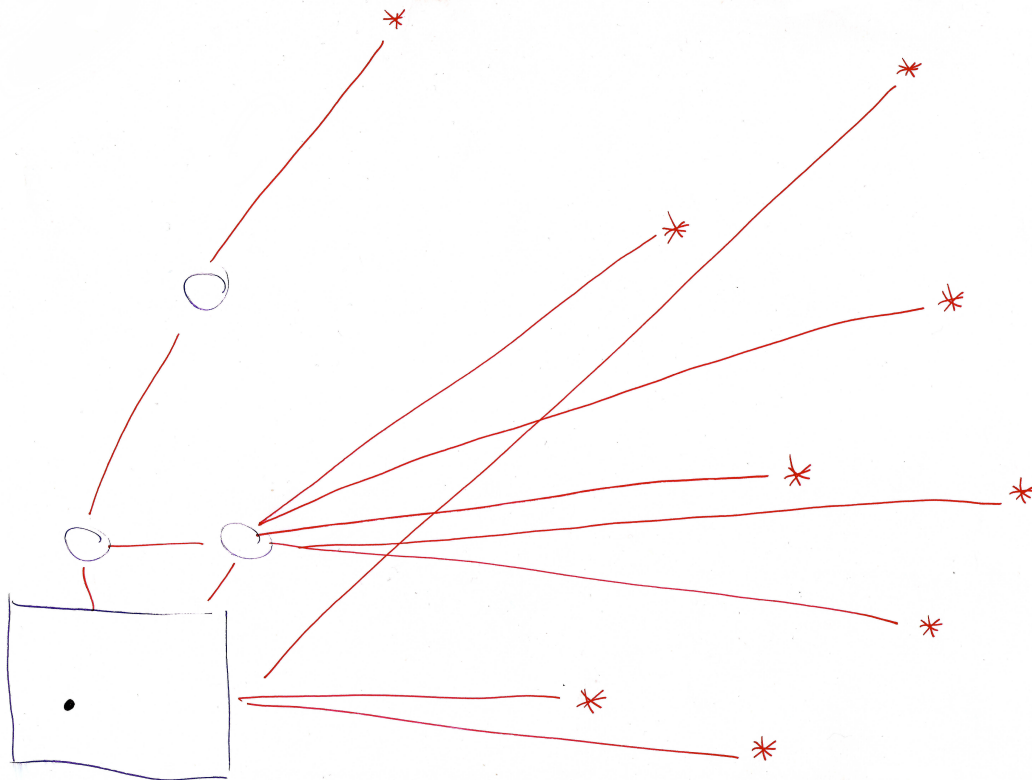


Figure 14. Researcher F. CWAHI Cognitive Map. 4 June 2010.

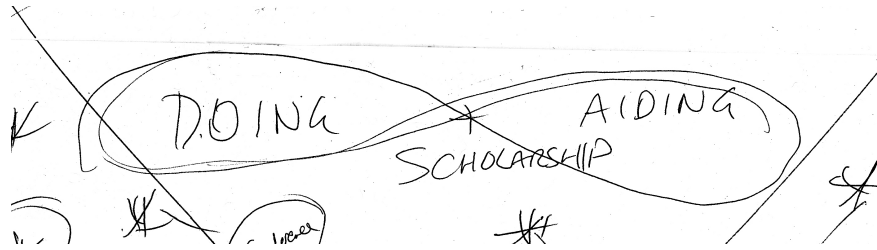


Figure 15. Founder B. CWAHI Cognitive Map. Detail.

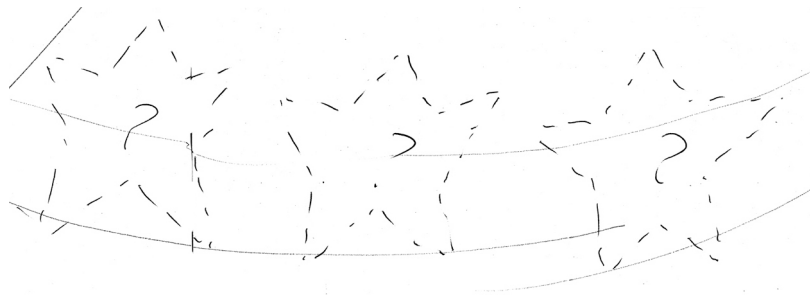


Figure 16. Founder B. CWAHI Cognitive Map. Detail.

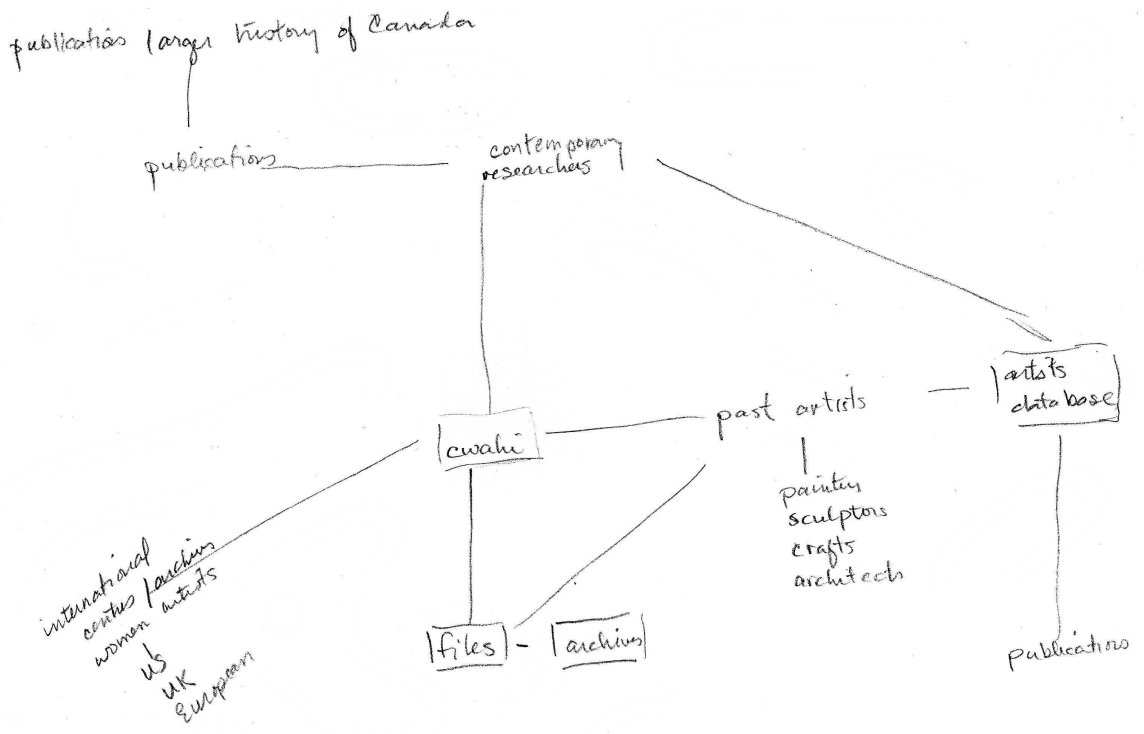


Figure 17. Founder C. CWAHI Cognitive Map C. 11 May 2011.