

# INTERROGATING ARCHIVES

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## THE BIRKBECK INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

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**Date:** Thursday 18th July 2019

**Time:** 10am – 6pm

**Location:** Room B04, 43 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, London

### EVENT OUTLINE

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**Speakers:** Ama Josephine Budge (Birkbeck PhD), Fran Lock (Birkbeck PhD), Lina Džuverović (Birkbeck), Rosemary Grennan (MayDayRooms), Piyel Haldar (Birkbeck), Louise Hide (Birkbeck), Wellcome Collection, Sarah Garrod (George Padmore Institute), Stef Dickers (Bishopsgate Institute)

**Chairs:** Catherine Grant (Birkbeck), Felicity Callard (BISR Director, Birkbeck), Julian Swann (PVM Research, Birkbeck).

This event will consider questions of authorship and power within the archive, and how the materials contained within them can be mobilised from their static locations and repurposed within academic, artistic, radical or imaginary frameworks. A series of short talks, panel discussions and performances given by academics, students and archival professionals will consider archival materials from various perspectives; asking what is at stake in instituting an archive, how archives might be repurposed as political acts, and the ethical dilemmas of dealing with sensitive sources. A series of short performances from current and former Birkbeck students will explore the ways in which archives can be created, imagined, and used to empower marginalised groups. Finally, a group of archival specialists from Bishopsgate Institute, George Padmore Institute, MayDay Rooms and Wellcome Collection will each explore their individual collections and the ways these can be used in academic research and beyond.

For Birkbeck PhD students, we are offering an opportunity to learn from and work closely with archival experts over a period of two days, to consider how using archives and archival materials might contribute to and further their research. The first day, as outlined above, will consist of a series of lectures, performances, and panel discussions from archivists, academics and PhD students, and will open to students, academics and the general public.

The second day will offer Birkbeck Students a chance to visit the archive of their choice and be given a guided tour by the specialist, followed by time to engage with the materials in that collection. These visits will be facilitated by one of the archival experts from the Wellcome Collection, the George Padmore Institute, MayDay Rooms, and the Bishopsgate Institute.

This event will allow students to consider questions of authorship and power within the archive, and how the materials contained within them can be mobilised from their static locations and repurposed within dissident frameworks. Students will be asked to consider the origins materials and how their historicity imbues them with certain meaning; whether their presence within a specific collection changes the way in which we might see or use them; what their limitations are, as physical objects, and how they might be handled both literally and figuratively; and the ways in

which dissemination and circulation of these objects as part of a research project might interrupt or change the object's course of meaning.

We are asking students to apply to attend the workshop and visit with one of the four archives, as best fits their academic research and interests. Applications should include a brief outline of their research and some details as to why the workshop and visit would be beneficial to them. We ask that these applications do not exceed 700 words. Places are limited, so we advise early application. Students will be encouraged to give a brief presentation (5-10 minutes) during their visit to the archive to explain their research and interests to their peers and the archival specialist present.

**Applications of interest should be sent to: [bisr@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:bisr@bbk.ac.uk) no later than 5pm on Thursday 25th July 2019. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, with 5 spaces reserved for each tour.**

## PROGRAMME

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**10:00 / Coffee and Welcome / Room G01**

**10:30 – 12:00: PANEL 1 / Interrogating Archives / Room B04**

Short talks (15 minutes each) + panel discussion from Birkbeck academics and students

The talks should focus on how archives can be used specifically in an academic context, in practise-based research

**Speakers: Dr Lina Džuverović, Dr Louise Hide, Dr Piyel Haldar**

**Chair: Professor Julian Swann**

- **Instituting an Archive by Dr Piyel Haldar**
- **The archive as a political act by Dr Lina Džuverović**
- **Working with sensitive sources by Dr Louise Hide**

Many of us working in the humanities, arts and social sciences draw on historical sources. In this talk I will reflect on a number of issues that have been raised in an ongoing series of interdisciplinary seminars on working with personally and politically sensitive sources. What, we have asked, are our responsibilities to our 'historical subjects' and how might they shape our research practice? How do we assess what is and is not sensitive? What is our duty of care not only to the living, but to the dead who have not given consent for us to use their personal information? How should we consider records that were generated at a time when less stringent regulations were in place? Should we anonymize, or not? All are deep and pressing questions around ethics and good practice that face researchers today.

**12:30 – 13:30: PANEL 2 / Imagining Archives / Room B04**

Talks and performances from current / past Birkbeck PhD students, whose research looks at the ways in which archives can be created, imagined, and used to empower marginalised groups.

**Speakers: Ama Josephine Budge (Birkbeck), Fran Lock (Birkbeck)**

**Chair: Professor Felicity Callard**

- **By Ama Josephine Budge**

- **By Fran Lock**

**13:30 – 15:00: LUNCH / Room G01**

Refreshments will be provided

**15:00 – 16:30: PANEL 3 / Exploring Archives / Room B04**

Short talks (15 minutes each) from four archival specialists discussing their respective collections, followed by a panel discussion.

**Speakers: Stef Dickers (Bishopsgate Institute), Fani Arampatzidou (MayDay Rooms), Sarah Garrod (George Padmore Institute) + Ross McFarlane (Wellcome Collection)**

**Chair: Professor Catherine Grant**

**16:30 – 18:00: Reception / Room G01**

We would like to invite speakers and attendees to join us for a wine reception following the final panel discussion.

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## **PROGRAMME / DAY 2**

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The second day is open to PhD students from Birkbeck and the Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network only, and will involve a tour of one of four archives and time to access and explore the collections housed there. Each visit will offer a maximum of 5 places, which will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Students must sign up before the first event.

**This workshop is free and open to all PhD students from Birkbeck and the Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network: Book Your Place**

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### **SPEAKER BIOS**

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**Ama Josephine Budge** is a Speculative Writer, Artist, Curator and Pleasure Activist whose work navigates intimate explorations of race, art, ecology and feminism, working to activate movements that catalyse human rights, environmental evolutions and troublesomely queered identities. Ama is a PhD candidate in Psychosocial Studies with Dr Gail Lewis at Birkbeck. Her research takes a queer, decolonial approach to challenging climate colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa with a particular focus on inherently environmentalist pleasure practices in Ghana and Kenya.

**Catherine Grant** is a professor of Digital Media and Screen Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, UK. Catherine has published widely on theories and practices of film authorship, adaptation and intertextuality, and has edited important collections of work on world cinema, Latin American cinema, digital film and media studies, and the audiovisual essay.

**Felicity Callard** is a professor in the Department of Psychosocial Studies and as Director of the Birkbeck Institute for Social Research. She is an interdisciplinary scholar with a background in both the social sciences and the humanities; she has, additionally, collaborated with life scientists (as well as social scientists, humanists and artists) for a number of years. Her research centres on the twentieth- and twenty-first century human sciences (specifically: psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis and cognitive neuroscience).

**Fran Lock** is the author of six poetry collections, most recently *Ruses and Fuses* in collaboration with collage artist Steev Burgess (Culture Matters, 2019), and *Triptych*, (Poetry Bus, 2019). Her seventh collection, *Contains Mild Peril*, will be published by Out Spoken Press later this year. Fran is an associate editor at Culture Matters, and is currently working alongside Jane Burn to put together a print anthology of working-class women poets. This will be launched in October this year. Fran is a post-doctoral candidate at Birkbeck College, University of London, undertaking a practice-based PhD on the epistolary form in contemporary poetry and its unique relationship to grieving and to trauma. Her current practise considers the letter as archival 'ephemera', and asks whether in its apparent inferior status to the body of the 'official' archive, it may be used to infiltrate or undermine accepted historical records of community violence, transforming archival space into a scene of subaltern saying, where memory, mourning, and protest are inextricably located.

**Julian Swann** is Pro-Vice Master for Research and professor of Early Modern History and has taught at Birkbeck since 1989. He is interested in all aspects of French history, but is currently working on a major biography of Louis XV.

**Lina Džuverović** is an independent curator and Lecturer in Arts Policy and Management at Birkbeck's Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies. Previously she was Artistic Director of Calvert 22 Foundation, founding director of the London-based curatorial agency Electra, has held curatorial posts at ICA London and the Lux Centre and was Arts Council's Decibel Curatorial Fellow in 2016. Prior to joining Birkbeck, Lina taught at the University of Reading and at IZK – Institute for Contemporary Art, TU Graz, Austria. Džuverović's PhD (Royal College of Art/Tate), contributed research on Yugoslav pop towards Tate Modern's exhibition *The World Goes Pop* (2015).

**Louise Hide** is a Wellcome Trust Fellow in Medical Humanities based in the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research project is titled 'Cultures of Harm in Residential Institutions for Long-term Adult Care, Britain 1945-1980s'. She has published on abuse, pain and institutional cultures. Her first monograph, *Gender and Class in English Asylums, 1890-1914* was published in 2014.

**Piyel Haldar** is a Senior Lecturer in Law at Birkbeck College. He was a managing editor of *Law and Critique* (Springerlink) until 2013 and is on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Law and Humanities*.

**Rosemary Grennan** works at the Mayday Rooms in London, and is a studying for a PhD in Anthropology at UCL.

**Sarah Garrod** is an archivist at the George Padmore Institute (GPI). Sarah joined the George Padmore Institute in 2003 and has helped develop the archive into a valuable resource for the history and experience of post war black communities in the UK. Previous experience has included archival work for local authorities and the London Metropolitan Archives.

**Stef Dickers** is the Library and Archives Manager at Bishopsgate Institute and looks after its collections on the history of London, the labour movement, co-operation, freethought and humanism. He is also secretary of the Archives and Resources Committee of the Society for the Study of Labour History. He is Co-Director of the Raphael Samuel History Centre, Chair of the Socialist History Society and sits on the committee of the oral history consortium Britain at Work, 1945-1995. Stefan is also co-founder of the Network of Radical Libraries and Archives (NORLA).

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## ARCHIVES

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**Bishopsgate Institute's** printed and archival collections cover a variety of subject areas exploring the experiences of everyday people, and facilitating the study of history from below. With a special focus on activities in and around the Capital, the archives and collections they hold can be grouped in to seven major collecting areas:

- Co-operation
- Feminist and Women's History
- Freethought and Humanism
- Labour and Socialist History
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer History
- London History
- Protest and Campaigning

They are also home to a growing number of photographic collections (with a focus on street photography), and oral history collections created by heritage projects and community groups.

**George Padmore Institute** is an archive, educational resource and research centre housing materials relating to the black community of Caribbean, African and Asian descent in Britain and continental Europe. Founded in 1991, they are based in North London where they often hold educational and cultural activities including talks and readings. They also publish relevant materials and are making their archives accessible to the general public.

**MayDay Rooms** is an archive of radical history, social movements, and experimental and marginal culture. Over the last five years we have developed collections on a wide range of struggles, protests, and cultural projects from the 1960s to the present, with a special emphasis on ephemera and informal publications. This type of material suffers from a double threat: firstly that it is deleted, forgotten, or simply undocumented and uncollected by traditional and state archives; and secondly that conventional archival practices subject this sort of material to persistent misinterpretation through conserving it in a "value free" or politically neutral setting. Unlike other archives, which are often designed for individuals to quietly peruse documents, we instead consistently attempt to work collectively on archival deposits, and to "activate" them in the midst of present social antagonisms. We consider the material traces of past struggles to be most important for those who continue to try to transform the world. As such MayDay Rooms combines its archive with being an organising and self-educational space for radicals, and is home to a number of activist groups, radical media projects, and grassroots unions.

**Wellcome Collection** is a free museum and library that aims to challenge how we all think and feel about health. Through exhibitions, collections, live programming, digital, broadcast and publishing, they create opportunities for people to think deeply about the connections between science, medicine, life and art.

They are part of the Wellcome Trust, which was established under Sir Henry Wellcome's will in 1936. Wellcome is a global charitable foundation, which aims to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. Politically and financially independent, Wellcome supports scientists and researchers to take on big problems, fuel imaginations and spark debate.