

Fragmenting the Archive- Encounters, Memory and Futurity

My PhD is currently titled *Fragmenting the Archive- Encounters, Memory and Futurity*, and will investigate the ways that black women's independent photographic archives may be able to question the role of archival knowledge through their conditions of production, and the conditions in which we now encounter them. Looking at transnational independent archives of the West African diaspora from the 1980s onwards, the research will focus on archival collections not yet fully collected or obtained by an institution, for example, located in 'informal' conditions i.e in homes, and family photo albums, and will testify to a rethinking of black women's visual storytelling and relationship to the camera from the 20th century- today.



Research Questions:

- *What are the physical conditions for memory and preservation?*
- *What is the archival alternative? What is the place of preservation beyond the archive?*
- *How do Black people and other marginalised bodies deal with the (un)desire to be 'archived'?*
- *How does this lead to innovative ways of thinking about what an archive might look like, feel like, sound like, or smell like?*
- *What are the possibilities and limitations of the futurity of the archive?*
- *What is the unique intersection of contemporary art and archival practice?*
- *What do we gain from a critical reflection on archival knowledges and how they are produced?*
- *What else can be shared in the place of the photograph?*
- *What are the functions of unseen presences in research methods?*
- *How can curatorial practice be used to consolidate ideas around decentring knowledge and renegotiating lost presences?*
- *What is the space of a black feminist perspective on archives, photography, and memory?*
- *What is the role of cultural archives in creating and sustaining connections between diasporic communities?*

Research Methods and Aims:

- *Fieldwork will identify photographic materials and collections to use as case studies*
- *Fieldwork will also be used to identify key contemporary artists to also use as case studies concerning contemporary interactions with archival materials.*
- *Curatorial work will be used as case studies to think about how my own curatorial practice may be used as a practice-based intermediary for my research.*
- *A collection of data and materials will be necessary to rethink diasporic, transatlantic links between the West African diasporic nations I will use as case studies.*
- *Oral history interviews will be used to gain first-hand accounts of key events I will be referencing in the research. This is vital as my research looks to re-establish black women and their stories as first-hand accounts of histories, centring their knowledge and traditional ways of building knowledge, rather than placing them on the periphery of discourses concerning their histories, cultures, and people.*
- *Rethink the role of diasporas in the late 20th to 21st century, and understand relationships and ideas of migration through a Transnational black feminist study.*

Image Credits:

Top Left- Image from the Rita Cliff Archive

Top Right, Clockwise: Image of my mother from Personal Family Archive, 1991.

Image from the Rita Cliff Archive.

Image from the Black Archives Sweden, Family Archives Project.

Image from Frida Orupabo, *Untitled*, 2008.



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