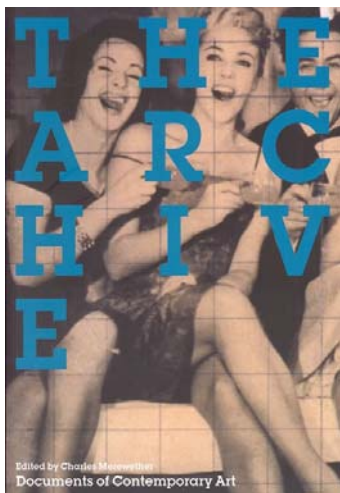


The Archive / Edited by Charles Merewether.—(Documents of contemporary art series).—Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, February, 2007.—208 p.—ISBN 0-262-63338-8 (pa., alk. paper): \$22.95.



The Archive is a part of the new “Documents of Contemporary Art” series by MIT Press. In this collection of texts, Charles Merewether, an art historian and writer on contemporary and postwar art, introduces readers to the ways in which the archive has been “defined, examined, contested, and reinvented” by artists and cultural theorists from the twentieth century to the present. While *The Archive* does not offer new perspectives on “the archive” *per se*, this first survey of its kind does an excellent job of compiling existing perspectives and voices, reflecting the nature and function of archives in postwar art.

The essays in the book are arranged thematically. Topics considered are: the relation between art and the archive; the inscription of the archive within systems of knowledge; uses of the archive by artists and art historians since 1945; and texts that debate the notion and construct of the historical record. Writings on the importance of the archive to modernity and contemporary art by Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Hal Foster and others are presented, and essays on the archival practice of artists such as Gerhard Richter, Christian Boltanski, Renée Green and The Atlas Group complement them well.

It is important to note that this is neither an anthology of images nor an anthology of illustrated essays; it is an anthology of texts. While Merewether may have included many essays of artists’ own words, the anthology rests securely within the realm of art historical discourse. The authority of the word is paramount. Additionally, essays have not been reproduced in their entirety but as excerpts. Readers will have to go elsewhere to read full texts.

The Archive would be an excellent purchase for any library serving an undergraduate or graduate population. As a closing to the essays, the anthology provides a detailed bibliography on additional texts and artists’ projects relating to the concept of the archive. The bibliography alone will be invaluable to students, researchers, and artists exploring notions of the archive. As a first-stop resource on the consideration of the archive in relation to modern art, the publication is commendable.

Rachel Chatalbash, Processing Archivist, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives,
rchatalbash@guggenheim.org

Copyright © 2007 ARLIS/NA