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Ephemera: Performing the Archive

This paper will present the Great Western Research project, *Performing the Archive: the Future of the Past*, which is based in the University of Bristol Theatre Collection's Live Art Archives and Arnolfini Live's archives, partnered with Exeter University Department of Drama.

The paper presents a dialogue between theoretical positions and practical propositions, made with audio-visual materials selected from the holdings of the archives. The presentation will un-think the ontological distinctions between the performance archive, the documents contained within, and the performance events that are its objects. Auslander's 'The Performativity of Performance Documentation' (2006) and Schneider's 'Document Perform Collaborate Collaborate Perform Document' (2006) provide the discursive context.

This contribution will explore the ephemerality of documentary objects, their tendency towards loss and disappearance, the eventhood of the archives that hold them, and the ongoing processes of preservation and conservation for the future, including migration to new formats. The paper asks: How do documents perform and how are the archives that hold them performative? Can the production, circulation and reception of performance documents be included within the frame of the works themselves? How do performances remain and produce residues that can be retained? Where are these traces placed for posterity? What is the position of ephemeral remains, held in the memory or embodied, of rumours, oral accounts and experiential knowledges, which circulate in and through practice? Can performance document or archive itself? What are the roles of revival, reenactment and reuse as acts of remaining and as means by which performance events might reappear?

Panel abstract:

Archival Events and Eventful Archives: In-Between Performance and Document
Participants: Paul Clarke, University of Bristol; Mike Pearson, Aberystwyth University; Heike Roms, Aberystwyth University (Convenor)

Panel Proposal submitted by Dr Heike Roms.