

## **Critical Thinking and Making: The Visual Archive**

**Parsons School of Design  
School of Art, Media, and Technology  
PSAM 1130-C CRN 9376  
Academic Entrance 63 Fifth Ave  
R 304**

**Thursdays, 12:10pm - 2:50pm**

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Office hours by appointment**

**Class website  
glissmann.com/teaching/visualarchive**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This class explores the relationship between form and content: How is meaning constructed and communicated through visual language? Through observing, collecting, analyzing, writing, and form making, students apply design processes involving visual research, concept generation, and craft skills.

Driven by research interest, students will use digital and analog means to build visual archives. These collections are approached as a resource of critical inquiry and to respond to current socio-political issues.

Students will develop projects and build up skills across media ranging from physical collaging to digital artifacts and more complex visual essays for paper and for screen.

### **COURSE CONTENT**

For this class, we will define the archive as “a collection of items which form evidence of the activities of a person or institution.” (1) In this sense, you will be creating a growing visual research collection over 15 weeks:

#### **1 Discover: Building the Archive**

During the first phase, we will explore principles and elements of design & communication design methodologies to populate your archive. You will be guided by a series of experimental exercises to generate records (visuals) as a response to your individual research inquiry. This research inquiry is a set of questions based on your previous life experience, education or your current socio-political interest. While we will formulate this research interest during the first two weeks of the semester you will be able to realign your investigation at any point.

Your archive is your archive. Besides collecting the visual responses to class assignments, you are encouraged to document random artifacts; inspirational resources; pictures you find in magazines, books, flyers or in the streets.

Learning does not only happen in the classroom. Make sure you expose yourself to the city, to culture, to life—as much as our current living situation allows you to. Visiting an exhibition (online) might trigger exactly that missing thought for your current design project. This “habit of collecting ideas” will also help you to identify your own visual language and inspire your future creative practice.

The idea of phase 1 is to explore, open up, learn, understand and produce the records that will help you to define a focus in phase 2:

## 2 Define, Develop, Deliver: Archive as Method

During the second phase, you will determine a focus for your archive. This can be based on content, visual direction or both. What is the purpose of your archive? How could it have a positive impact for a specific community? Which media channel is most appropriate for your archive—where and how does it live?

This class looks at thinking and making as cross-pollinating activities: phase 1 & 2 might not be completely distinct but rather become cycles of your creative practice. Your final archive might include everything you did in class or a very specific aspect/practice of what you experienced.

The only rules for your final archive: it has to be inquiry centered, process focused, and needs to have at least 100 records. Each record needs to have a caption.

(1) “Introduction to Archives.” *What are archives?* King’s College Cambridge, October 20, 2017. <http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/archive-centre/introduction-archives/definition/index.html>.

### **REMOTE RESOURCES**

This syllabus has a schedule that is tentative. You will find detailed information about synchronous and asynchronous activities & assignments on the class website:

**[glissmann.com/teaching/visualarchive](http://glissmann.com/teaching/visualarchive)**

Additional links including passwords to MURAL, VIMEO, and GOOGLE DRIVE can be found on the class CANVAS site. Homework and presentations have to be submitted through the shared google drive folder.

**<https://canvas.newschool.edu/courses/1524073>**

### **EVALUATION**

Meaningful Participation	15%
1 Discover: Building the Archive	
Bilderatlas	5%
Urban Street Collage	5%
Urban Traces	5%
Color	5%
Found Artifacts	5%
Designing Programs I & II	15%
2 Define, Develop, Deliver: Archive as Method	
Final Archive, Process Documentation	45%

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- 1 Use a basic vocabulary of communication design to articulate their design process and critique others;
- 2 Work through all the steps of the design research process, e.g. brainstorming, assembling, drafting, editing, critically analyzing, and prototyping their ideas through the means of visual language;
- 3 Evaluate how visual language and its variables are applied to reading/writing systems to facilitate orientation and create consistency;
- 4 Demonstrate an understanding of the iterative making process in interaction design, including an ability to incorporate feedback into their work,
- 5 Develop critical questions in relation to historical and contemporary sources, and to accurately evaluate the validity of the context of these sources.

## **TEXTBOOKS & READINGS**

You are required to study a few readings which I will distribute in class as a soft copy. However it is equally important to find your own readings that are related to your topic. In order to realize a successful project in this class you have to become a specialist of your chosen area/topic.

Here is a list of general recommendations:

- 1 Bratton, Benjamin H. *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.
- 2 Colomina, Beatriz, and Mark Wigley. *Are We Human? Notes on an Archeology of Design*. Zürich: Lars Müller, 2016.
- 3 McCloud, Scott, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, New York: Harper, 1990
- 4 Willis, Anne-Marie. *The Design Philosophy Reader*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019.
- 5 *Ways of Seeing* Based on the BBC Television Series with John Berger. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008.
- 6 Paul Soulellis, *Urgent Archives* <https://soulellis.com/writing/aug2017/>
- 7 Kalman, Tibor, Miller, Abbott and Jacobs, Carrie. *Good History, Bad History*.

**SCHEDULE**

This schedule is tentative. Please check class website for detailed information, homework and expected preparations.

SYN Synchronous: All-class (15), Small Group (3-4), Paired, One-on-one  
 ASYN Asynchronous: Homework, Pre-recorded Presentations, Video Tutorials, ...

## WEEK 1

**9/2 Introduction**

SYN	All-Class Pairs Group (3-4) Group (3-4)	Syllabus, Methodologies, Participants. Archives & the Everyday. Archive of Archives. Identify Questions for reading.
ASYN	Screening Reading Reading Writing Assignment 1	Archive as Method, Glissmann. Ways of Seeing. Berger. Pp7-10. What makes a good research topic? Collins. Identify an archive in your everyday. 5 Objects: Pecha Kucha.

## WEEK 2

**9/9 What makes a good research topic?**

SYN	All-Class All-Class All-Class Group (3-4) All-Class	Review the day's agenda. Pecha Kucha Object Introduction. BREAK Archiving Exercise & Reading Discussion. Kick-off: Visual Narrative.
ASYN	Video Video Reading Reading Assignment 2	Powers of Ten. Charles and Ray Eames. Wolfgang Tillmans Interview. Dirk VIS. Research for People who think... Victor Papanek. Design for the Real World Visual Narrative / How to organize things.

## WEEK 3

**9/16 Visual Narrative**

SYN	All-Class Group (3-4) All-Class	Review the day's agenda. Visual Narrative Exercise (with breaks). Experiment 1 kick-off: Bilderatlas, 3 Panels.
ASYN	Screening	Bilderatlas & Visual Grids. Glissmann.

Reading  
 Reading  
 Reading  
 Experiment 1  
 Writing

Mnemosyne Atlas. Aby Warburg.  
 Willy Fleckhaus Interview & Visuals.  
 Are we Human. Colomina & Wigley.  
 Bilderatlas: 3 Plates.  
 Research Inquiry

## WEEK 4

**9/23 Bilderatlas: 3 Plates**

SYN All-Class  
 Group (3-4)  
 All-Class

Review the day's agenda.  
 Bilderatlas Exercise (with breaks).  
 Experiment 2 kick-off: Street Collages.

ASYN Reading  
 Demo  
 Reading  
 Experiment 2  
 Writing

Understanding Comics. Scott McCloud.  
 Urban Street Collages Process. Glissmann.  
 Principles of Visual Language. Kennedy Center.  
 Urban Street Collages  
 Research Inquiry

## WEEK 5

**9/30 Field Studies: Street Collages**

SYN All-Class  
 All-Class  
 Group (3-4)  
 All-Class

Review the day's agenda.  
 Urban Street Collages Screening.  
 Urban Street Collages Exercise.  
 Experiment 3 kick-off: Urban Traces.

ASYN Screening  
 Demo  
 Reading  
 Reading  
 Video  
 Video  
 Experiment 3  
 Writing

Urban Traces / Street Rubbings. Glissmann.  
 Creating animated gifs.  
 See how you feel. David Gibbs. (Skim)  
 Triangle. Bruno Munari. (Skim)  
 Kreise. Oskar Fischinger.  
 Symphonie Diagonale. Viking Eggeling.  
 Urban Traces / Street Rubbings  
 Research Inquiry

## WEEK 6

**10/7 Field Studies: Urban Traces**

SYN All-Class  
 All-Class  
 Group (3-4)  
 All-Class

Review the day's agenda.  
 Virtual Exhibition: GIFs  
 Research Inquiry / Manifesto  
 Experiment 4 kick-off: Color

ASYN Reading

Color

Reading  
 Reading  
 Reading  
 Video  
 Experiment 4

Werner's Nomenclature of Colors. (Skim)  
 Saussure's Cyanometer.  
 Spencer Finch. NYT.  
 From earth: everywhere. Herman de Vries.  
 Color

WEEK 7

**10/14 Field Studies: Color**

SYN All-Class  
 All-Class  
 All-Class

Review the day's agenda.  
 Archiving Color Workshop.  
 Experiment 5 kick-off: Found Objects

ASYN Video  
 Screening  
 Experiment 5

Karel Marten's Process.  
 Sample Projects  
 Found Imagery

WEEK 8

**10/21 Field School**

SYN Details TBD

WEEK 9

**10/28 Found Imagery**

SYN All-Class  
 Group (3-4)  
 Group (3-4)  
 All-Class

Review the day's agenda.  
 Found Imagery Screening.  
 Research Inquiry Workshop.  
 Experiment 6 kick-off: Instructions.

ASYN Screening  
 Reading  
 Reading  
 Screening  
 Experiment 6

Instructions in Art and Science. Glissmann.  
 Designing Programs. Karl Gerstner.  
 Instructions. Sol LeWitt.  
 Archive of Observation Scores. OPL, Parsons.  
 Designing Programs

WEEK 10

**11/4 Designing Programs I**

SYN All-Class  
 All-Class  
 Group (3-4)

Review the day's agenda.  
 Elevator Pitch: Instructions.  
 Designing Programs Workshop.

ASYN Reading

THE BIG ARCHIVE

Experiment 7  
 Writing  
 Art from bureaucracy. Sven Spieker.  
 Enact Archive Scores of your peers.  
 Archive & Context.

WEEK 11

**11/11 Archive Pitch & Designing Programs**

*SYN* Individual Individual Meetings, Archive Concepts.

*HW* Final Project Archive & Context.

WEEK 12

**11/18 Archive Pitch**

*SYN* All-Class Review the day's agenda.  
 Group (3-4) Archive Proposal Workshop

*ASYN* Individual Individual research material  
 Final Project Archive & Context. Media Channel.

WEEK 13

**11/25 Fall Break**

WEEK 14

**12/2 Studio – Individual Meetings**

*SYN* Individuals Individual Meetings

*ASYN* Final Project Archive & Context. Meta Data. Captions.

WEEK 15

**12/9 Studio – Individual or Group Workshop**

*SYN* All-Class Studio. Work in groups or individually.  
 One meeting with Pascal this week is mandatory

WEEK 16 -

**12/16 Final Presentation**

*SYN* All-Class Presentations. What's next?.

## **GRADING STANDARDS**

**A** Superior work. You have clearly demonstrated an enthusiasm for the projects, and an understanding of the concepts that guide your decisions. Your work demonstrates original and creative thinking and your projects are consistently and cleanly executed with a high level of attention devoted to craft and clarity of writing. You're able to explain your own work and offer insightful critique of your classmates' projects. You are present in class and participate in discussions.

**B** Good work. You've completed all of the projects with a sufficient level of quality. Your projects are less conceptually clear, but you have displayed clear effort in attempting an understanding. Your projects are cleanly executed with a good level of attention devoted to craft and clarity of writing. You're able to explain your own work and offer insightful critique of your classmates' projects. You are present in class and participate in discussions.

**C** Satisfactory work. You've shown that you can interact with the concepts presented in class, but you have not demonstrated a deep understanding or enthusiasm for your work. You do not demonstrate a high level of attention to craft. You participate in some discussions but have not added insightful critique.

**D** Your work adheres to each project's guidelines but you have not demonstrated original thought or depth of understanding of the concepts presented in class. You have not participated in class discussions, or have missed a significant amount of classes.

**F** Failing grades are given for required work that is not submitted or for incomplete final projects. Make-up work or completion of missed assignments may be permitted only with the approval of the instructor and the program director.

**W** The grade of W may be issued by the Office of the Registrar to a student who officially withdraws from a course within the applicable deadline. There is no academic penalty, but the grade will appear on the student transcript.

**Z** This grade is to be assigned to students who have never attended or stopped attending classes. Exceptions can be made if the student has completed enough work to warrant a grade (including a failing grade), and arrangements have been made with the instructor(s) and the Dean's Office prior to grade submission. The Z grade does not calculate into the student's GPA. Though a Z grade does not have a failing penalty it still carries a myriad of consequences for students on visas or receiving financial aid. Only issue the Z grade when a student meets the above criteria.

**I** The grade of I, or temporary incomplete, may be granted to a student under unusual and extenuating circumstances, such as when the student's academic life is interrupted by a medical or personal emergency. This mark is not given automatically but only upon the student's request and at the discretion of the instructor. A Request for Incomplete form must be completed and signed by student and instructor. The time allowed for completion of the work and removal of the "I" mark will be set by the instructor with the following limitations:



Work must be completed no later than the seventh week of the following fall semester for spring or summer term incompletes and no later than the seventh week of the following spring semester for fall term incompletes. Grades of “I” not revised in the prescribed time will be recorded as a final grade of “F” by the Registrar’s Office.

## **RESOURCES**

The university provides many resources to help students achieve academic and artistic excellence. These resources include:

[The University \(and associated\) Libraries](#)

[The University Learning Center](#)

[University Disabilities Services](#)

In keeping with The New School’s policy of providing equal access to individuals with disabilities, instructors are strongly encouraged to include a statement on their syllabus informing students that academic accommodations can be provided on the basis of disability if the student follows the protocol described. The following statement contains all of the elements that should be present. Instructors may want to make changes based on style preference or particular course content. Students Disability Services (SDS) assists students with permanent or temporary disabilities in need of academic and programmatic accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

In keeping with the university’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations must contact SDS. There are several ways for students to contact the office: via email at [StudentDisability@newschool.edu](mailto:StudentDisability@newschool.edu), through the Starfish service catalog, or by calling the office at 212.229.5626. A self-ID form can also be completed on the SDS webpage at [www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services](http://www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services). Once you contact the office, SDS staff will arrange an intake appointment to discuss your concerns and, if appropriate, provide you with accommodation notices to give to me. Please note that faculty will not work unilaterally with students to provide accommodations. If you inform me of a disability but do not provide any official notification, I must refer you to SDS.

[Making Center](#)

The Making Center is a constellation of shops, labs, and open workspaces that are situated across the New School to help students express their ideas in a variety of materials and methods. We have resources to help support woodworking, metalworking, ceramics and pottery work, photography and film, textiles, printmaking, 3D printing, manual and CNC machining, and more. A staff of technicians and student workers provide expertise and maintain the different shops and labs. Safety is a primary concern, so each area has policies for access, training, and etiquette with which students and faculty should be familiar. Many areas require specific orientations or trainings before access is granted.

[Health and Wellness](#): additional services and support available to New School students.

## **COLLEGE, SCHOOL, PROGRAM AND CLASS POLICIES**

A comprehensive overview of policy may be found under [Policies: A to Z](#). Students are also encouraged to consult the Academic Catalog for Parsons.

### **CLASS WEBSITE**

The class website is an important resource for this class. Students should check it for announcements and assignment before coming to class each week.

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

The use of electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops, cameras, etc.) is permitted when the device is being used in relation to the course's work. All other uses are prohibited in the classroom and devices should be turned off before class starts.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

Students are responsible for all assignments, even if they are absent. Late assignments, failure to complete the assignments for class discussion and/or critique, and lack of preparedness for in-class discussions, presentations and/or critiques will jeopardize your successful completion of this course.

### **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE**

Class participation is an essential part of class and includes: keeping up with reading, assignments, projects, contributing meaningfully to class discussions, active participation in group work, and attending synchronous sessions regularly and on time.

Parsons' attendance guidelines were developed to encourage students' success in all aspects of their academic programs. Full participation is essential to the successful completion of coursework and enhances the quality of the educational experience for all, particularly in courses where group work is integral; thus, Parsons promotes high levels of attendance. Students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly and in compliance with the standards stated in this course syllabus.

While attendance is just one aspect of active participation, absence from a significant portion of class time may prevent the successful attainment of course objectives. A significant portion of class time is generally defined as the equivalent of three weeks, or 20%, of class time. Lateness or early departure from class may be recorded as one full absence. Students may be asked to withdraw from a course if habitual absenteeism or tardiness has a negative impact on the class environment.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university.

Students are responsible for understanding the University's policy on academic honesty and integrity and must make use of proper citations of sources for writing papers, creating, presenting, and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research. It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. The full text of the policy, including adjudication procedures, is found on the university website under [Policies: A to Z](#). Resources regarding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it can be found on the [Learning Center's website](#).

The New School views "academic honesty and integrity" as the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship for his or her own work and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. This obligation is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate, and creative and academic pursuits. Academic honesty and integrity includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of faculty members and other students). Academic dishonesty results from infractions of this "accurate use". The standards of academic honesty and integrity, and citation of sources, apply to all forms of academic work, including submissions of drafts of final papers or projects. All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty and integrity. Please see the complete policy in the Parsons Catalog.

### **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS**

The New School (the "university") seeks to encourage creativity and invention among its faculty members and students. In doing so, the University affirms its traditional commitment to the personal ownership by its faculty members and students of Intellectual Property Rights in works they create. The complete policy governing Intellectual Property Rights may be seen on the university website, [on the Provost's page](#).

### **Student Course Ratings (Course Evaluations)**

During the last two weeks of the semester, students are asked to provide feedback for each of their courses through an online survey. They cannot view grades until providing feedback or officially declining to do so. Course evaluations are a vital space where students can speak about the learning experience. It is an important process which provides valuable data about the successful delivery and support of a course or topic to both the faculty and administrators. Instructors rely on course rating surveys for feedback on the course and teaching methods, so they can understand what aspects of the class are most successful in teaching students, and what aspects might be improved or changed in future. Without this information, it can be difficult for an instructor to reflect upon and improve teaching methods and course design. In addition, program/department chairs and other administrators review course surveys. Instructions are available online