

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

**Parsons School of Design  
School of Art, Media, and Technology  
PSAM 1130-A CRN 7036  
68 5th Ave, Room: 104**

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

**Pascal Glissmann  
pascal@newschool.edu  
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**

To initiate this class, we will be working with this definition of what an archive is: “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 — while developing your own definition of what an archive is, how it could be part of your artistic practice, and which roles archives play in a larger socio-political context.

**1 Discover: Building the Archive**

During the first phase, we will explore principles and elements of design & communication design methodologies to populate your archive. A series of experimental exercises will guide you to create recordings (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 any 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 inspirational resources; pictures from magazines, books, flyers, or random artifacts you find in the streets.

Learning happens beyond the classroom. Make sure you expose yourself to the

city, culture, and life—as much as our current living situation allows you to. Visiting an exhibition might trigger that missing thought for your current design project. This “habit of collecting ideas” will also help you to identify your 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, which can be based on content, visual direction or both. What is the purpose of your archive? How could it have a positive impact on 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: phases 1 & 2 might not be entirely distinct and merge into cycles of your creative practice. Your final archive can include everything you did in class or focus on a specific aspect/practice of what you experienced.

The only rule for your final archive is to be inquiry-centered, process-focused, and 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>.

### **LINKS/ 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 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/1825359>

### **EVALUATION**

Meaningful Participation	15%
1 Discover: Building the Archive	
Experiment 1: Exhausting an Object	5%
Experiment 2: Visual Narrative	5%
Experiment 3: Urban Field Studies	5%
Experiment 4: Typology	15%
Experiment 5: Time	10%
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 Vis, Dirk. Research for people who (think they) would rather create. Onomatopoe Projects. 2021.
- 2 Colomina, Beatriz, and Mark Wigley. Are We Human? Notes on an Archeology of Design. Lars Müller, 2016.
- 3 McCloud, Scott, Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art. Harper, 1990
- 4 Willis, Anne-Marie. The Design Philosophy Reader. Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019.
- 5 Berger, John. Ways of seeing. Penguin Classics, 2008.
- 6 Soulellis, Paul. Urgent Archives. <https://soulellis.com/writing/aug2017/>
- 7 Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz. Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression. University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

**SCHEDULE**

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

W1 1/22	<p><b>Critical Thinking &amp; Making: The Visual Archive</b> Introductions. What is this class? What is it not? Syllabus. Methodologies. Participants. Brainstorming Session. Identifying Reading Questions.</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. <i>Archive as Method</i>, recorded lecture 2. <i>Ways of Seeing</i> by John Berger 3. <i>What makes a good research topic?</i> by Hillary Collins 4. herman de vries 5. Christian Boltanski 6. Yuji Agematsu 7. Taryn Simon</p>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. As a response to the lecture, write a short summary (around 200 words) outlining your interest in archives. Use at least one example from the screening to support your perspective. 2. Choose 12 objects from your everyday life—they need to fit into the bag distributed in class.</p>
W2 1/29	<p><b>Objects as Archives: Exploring Identity and Research Through Everyday Things</b> Today's workshop encourages students to reflect on their personal and research interests by exploring the meanings, relationships, and narratives embedded in everyday objects. By organizing, categorizing, and captioning these objects, students will gain insights into archival structures and develop a meaningful research question.</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. Pati Hill, Understanding Your Chinese Scarf 2. Andrea Gallo, Shaping Language 3. Imhof &amp; Krenmayr, The PET Proof of Identity 4. Richard Long, Rock Drawings 5. Allan Mccollum, Minime Variazioni 6. Dirk Vis, Research for people who think they rather create</p>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. <b>Experiment 1: Exhausting an Object</b> Create a collection of twelve visuals, all inspired by a single starting point: an object from your everyday. Let this initial reference guide you as you experiment with a variety of interpretations and forms—there's no need to tie everything neatly together! This is about discovering new ways to create and think, with endless possibilities to explore.</p>
W3 2/5	<p><b>Form</b> In small groups, critique the collections and variations you've created from a single object. Discuss how captions, taxonomy, and arrangement influence your perception of both the recordings and the object itself. How do these choices shape its meaning?</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. Lorna Simpson 2. Charles and Ray, Eames. Powers of Ten 3. Wolfgang Tillmans 4. Jafa, Arthur. APEX @MoMA 5. Batia Suter, Parallel Encyclopedia, Interview 6. Aby Warburg; Bilderatlas Mnemosyne. Article</p>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. <b>Experiment 2: Visual Narrative</b> What are your "ways of looking?" What are the images in your life and of your life? Choose twelve images—these can be found photos, your own, or a mix. Print these 12 images. 4x6 inch (landscape or portrait). We will use them in class for a workshop—don't select images you feel uncomfortable sharing.</p>
W4 2/12	<p><b>Visual Narrative</b> This week, we'll move from objects to images that tell a story, focusing on visual narrative. How do order, sequence, and arrangement shape meaning? We'll also delve into Arthur Jafa's idea: "What happens in the overlap [of found images] that is you."</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics 2. Martin Venezky, Beautiful (Then Gone) 3. Urban Type Collages, recorded demo</p>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. <b>Experiment 3: Urban Field Studies</b> Choose a nearby location based on your research inquiry—a street, park, room, etc. Spend two hours there with a camera (or phone), exploring the space as a visual journalist. Capture lines, shapes, patterns, textures, typography, and both positive and negative spaces from various perspectives.</p>

W5 2/19	<p><b>Deconstructing Space: Urban Field Studies.</b></p> <p>What does it mean to translate a space or environment into experimental 2D visuals to build a collection? How might this practice shape a future archive that exists in the overlap between private and public realms?</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bernd and Hilla Becher</li> <li>2. <i>Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive</i> by Sue Breakell</li> <li>3. <i>Information Overload</i> by Claire Bishop on the superabundance of research-based art.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Experiment 4: Typology</b> A typology is a classification according to a general type or attribute. Through the lens of your research inquiry, identify one attribute to create an archive of at least 12 recordings. The shared attribute can be found within the “subject” (form, color, size, ...) or the recording methodology (stencil printing, photographed from a specific perspective, material rubbings).</li> </ol>
W6 2/26	<p><b>Typology I</b> Individual Meetings</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ari Versluis &amp; Ellie Uytenbroek, <i>Exactitudes</i></li> <li>2. Marco Cadioli, <i>Square with Concentric Circles &amp; Necessary Lines</i>,</li> <li>3. Zeo Leonard, <i>You see I am here after all</i></li> <li>4. Nicolai Howalt, <i>Light Break</i></li> <li>5. Taryn Simon, <i>Contraband</i></li> </ol>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect on your ideas and progress on the typology project. Please prepare the following: What is this typology-archive about? What are you looking at and why? What is your methodology to make recordings and create visuals? What role does time play in this investigation?</li> </ol>
W7 3/5	<p><b>Typology II</b> Workshop in class; Typology</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>1970–2000, ARCHIVE, DATABASE, PHOTOGRAPHY</i>, The Big Archive: Chapter 7, Spieker Sven</li> </ol>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On March 3rd, we will visit selected galleries in Chelsea. Each student will propose an exhibition that resonates with the themes of our class (archives, typologies, form-making) or aligns with their individual research topic. Follow the instructions to propose two exhibitions.</li> </ol>
W8 3/12	<p><b>Spring Break</b> no class</p>		
W9 3/19	<p><b>Field Trip</b></p> <p>We will meet in Chelsea to visit selected galleries. Field School will be a mix of shared and individual exploration—leaving room for you to visit the gallery of your choice. We will end at Printed Matter (231 11th Ave) with time to look at experimental publications or additional exhibitions.</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Steedman, Carolyn. <i>DUST</i>, The space of memory: in an archive.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document our field trip: At home, look at all images and select the ones (5-10) that speak to your research inquiry (directly or indirectly) and add them to your research document. Add a short paragraph to describe how these are meaningful to your research process.</li> <li>2. Continue the work on your typology.</li> </ol>
W10 3/26	<p><b>Typology III</b></p> <p>In-class workshop: Critique the typology project by imagining its translation across different times, spaces, and cultural contexts. Identify key elements that could influence the creation of your final archive.</p>	<p><b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Derrida, Jacques. <i>Archive Fever</i></li> </ol>	<p><b>Prepare for next class</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Experiment 5: One Hour</b> How does time translate into an archive? For our next experiment, you will make recordings during a specific hour of your choice, during the next week. The archive needs to have exactly 12 records with captions; its title will be the date and hour. Presentation/ dissemination requirements: all records need to be visible at the same time and as an animated gif.</li> </ol>

W11 4/2	<b>One Hour I</b> Individual Meetings	<b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. Penelope Umbrico 2. Tehching Hsieh, Time Clock Piece	<b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. Prepare your One Hour experiment as both a printed collection and an animated gif. Bring your laptop to next class.
W12 4/9	<b>One Hour II</b> In-class workshop: We'll explore the theme of time and shift towards material culture, focusing on how objects, spaces, and their materials play a role in artistic archival practice.	<b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. <i>What is Material Culture?</i> by Sophie Woodward 2. <i>Planetary Diagrams</i> by Likavčan & Heinicker	<b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. <b>Experiment 6: Planetary Diagrams</b> The satellite image meets my kitchen floor: How does your research inquiry appear on the Earth's surface, and how does it show up in your daily life? Create three visuals that connect to the surfaces in your immediate environment, and find three Google images of planetary surfaces that relate to your final archive concept.
W13 4/16	<b>Archive Pitch</b> What? So What? What Now? Workshop: Material Culture. The satellite image meets my kitchen floor: How does your research inquiry manifest itself on the Earth's surface? How does it manifest in your everyday? Introduce the methodology to create/capture 100 recordings for your archive. How will you develop captions? Who is your audience?.	<b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. Identify your own readings relating to your research.	<b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. Share the following to receive feedback: What do you record? How do you record? What is the rhythm/routine of your recording? 3 sample records (images, ...) of your archive with captions Metadata: list 10 data items you could collect for each record ranging from basic (date, size, name) to creative/speculative (news headlines, poem, emotions)
W14 4/23	<b>Archive Studio</b> Group Studio: Archive & Context. Meta Data. Captions.	<b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. Identify your own readings relating to your research.	<b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. Prototype/ Iteration of final archive. 2. Draft of Introduction
W15 4/30	<b>Archive Studio</b> Individual Meetings	<b>Readings &amp; References for next class</b> 1. Identify your own readings relating to your research.	<b>Prepare for next class</b> 1. Prototype/ Iteration of final archive. 2. Introduction
W16 5/7	<b>Final Archive</b> Dissemination/ Presentation. What is 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.

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

