

We all create archives; many of us actively use them, too. Artists, curators, and scholars of visual cultural studies have good reason to do primary research in archives. In them are treasure troves of material that spark the creative process and advance interdisciplinary projects.

Recognizing the archive as resource, Jacqueline Francis, Associate Professor in the Graduate Program in Visual & Critical Studies (VCS), taught the graduate seminar “Digging Deep: Research in the Archive” in the Spring 2018 semester. Students met with San Francisco-based historians E.G. Crichton and Chris Carlsson, and with visiting speakers Sara Ahmed and Gabriel Menotti as well. The class toured prominent public collections: Letterform Archives, the Prelinger Library, the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Maritime National Park, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Short writing assignments described these experiences. Students also read and responded to influential theoretical writings that discuss the ways that archives construct and preserve the concept of knowledge. Final projects were generated from close study of archival documents and curious objects.

We thank the CCA Libraries for this opportunity to present aspects of the seminar work. We appreciate the support of librarians Lisa Conrad and Daniel Ransom. It is with special pride that VCS notes that Holly McHugh, co-curator of this exhibition, and Yomna Osman, 2018-19 CCA Libraries Assistant Curator, were students in the “Digging Deep” seminar.

-- Jacqueline Francis and Holly McHugh, Curators