

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4

Resisting Recuperation: Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices

The Attic Archive



Digital Archive Box

24th November 2021, 2-6 pm, Zoom

Compiled by Judit Bodor and Roddy Hunter

Introduction to the past and present of The Attic Archive

The Attic Archive was conceived by artist Pete Horobin (b.1949) after graduating from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee in 1975. It documents the lifepath of an artist through the emergence and disappearance of different identities reflecting the changing conditions in his own life within particular periods of history.

The first projects in the Archive were *The Accessibility of The Art Object* (1977–1978) and *Junk Into Art/Art Into Junk* (1979). The first involved Horobin distributing small collages randomly through the post and simultaneously selling products such as handmade books, badges, postcards & collages very cheap through the gallery system to make art both widely accessible and affordable. In the second he connected artist collectives in Paris and Dundee inviting artists to construct temporary artworks from recycling industrial waste, which he documented before the work was disposed.

These early projects were followed by four ten-year-long artworks (in essence artist 'diaries' or 'portraits') emerging through the work of separate identities:

1st January 1980 – 31 December 1989

DATA (Daily Action Time Archive)

A self-historicization project documenting Pete Horobin's existence in his 30s, his ramblings in the Scottish landscape, and involvement in the 'Eternal Network' of correspondence artists internationally through mail art and [neoist activities](#). At times he worked under different identities, including [The Acrobat](#) and [The Principal Player](#), and became an 'actor' in his own life. He also used [multiple names](#) or 'collective identities, such as Monty Cantsin and Karen Eliot. He celebrated 1984 as the *Year of the Freedom* with PRAM (Pedestrian Rambles Around Myland), walking across Scotland carrying his belongings in an ordinary pram and sleeping in a canvas tent. Each campsite was signed by a 'chronogram'; an ephemeral Neoist symbol marking particular space and time in the landscape. He collected data from his activities every day on A4-size sheets which he then distributed widely via his then networks. He established the DATA Attic in a former squat on 37 Union Street Dundee in 1980, which housed the Attic Archive until 2010 and operated as an independent art space. He hosted [international artists and made spontaneous collaborative works](#) in Dundee, co-organised [Neoist Apartment Festivals](#)

Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices internationally, published several [SMILE Magazines](#), and researched the lives of Scottish artists' living on the dole.

1st January 1990 – 31st December 1999

The Marshall Anderson decade. Anderson emerged as a mixed-media artist, freelance art critic and journalist in his 40s. He travelled extensively in Scotland, for the most part on foot and lived mainly outdoors. He researched the work of outsider artists, curated the exhibition '[SOLOISTS: Outsider Art in Scotland](#)' for art.tm gallery, Inverness, and [worked collaboratively on several bookworks with Danish ceramicist Lotte Glob](#). To make money he rented out the DATA Attic to art students and wrote articles and exhibition reviews for magazines such as Artist Newsletter and Variant. He also curated an exhibition with Lynne Nealon of decorated coffins by Dundee Women Artists.

1st January 2000–31st December 2009

The Peter Haining decade. Haining was an artist in his 50s who also became the curator of the Attic Archive. He spent five years researching and documenting the works of autodidactic and naïve artists in Ireland as he bicycled around the 32 counties ([HIBERNIA](#)). Upon his return to Scotland, he spent his time (re)cataloguing, digitising, exhibiting, and separating The Attic Archive and securing its relocation, in parts, into different collections. Nobody wanted to take the archive as a whole but larger segments ended up in the collections of the [National Library of Scotland](#), the [National Irish Visual Art Library, Dublin](#); [Artpool Art Research Center at KEMKI Museum of Fine Art, Budapest](#), and the [University of Dundee Archives](#) and Museum Collections with a few artworks also taken into the collections of [The McManus Gallery, Dundee](#), the [Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art](#), and other smaller collections in Scotland.

1st January 2010 and 31st December 2020.

An entirely digital artwork by aitch, operating as ae phor, produced after the DATA Attic was sold. This work was borne out of an alphabetical pun (ae phor aitch). All artworks and animations were inspired by a single letter from the alphabet.. aitch also completed the relocation of material from the Attic Archive and [finished a few artworks from previous decades](#). The ae phor work was accepted by the [National Library of Scotland](#) from the time of its conception and has been collected on hard drives [not yet catalogued in detail].

Since 1st January 2020 –

The artist's lifepath now continues indeterminately (defined by fate) under the identity haha, which brings together the four previous identities in an acronym (Horobin, Anderson, Haining, aitch). Between June –July 2021, and as part of Curating Living Archives research project, Judit Bodor conducted 8-hours of oral

history conversation with haha 're-mapping the Attic Archive following an 'alphabetical script' of keywords, concepts and people. [The map](#) reconnects the content of the Attic Archive through memory to find what the artist describes as 'phylogenetic' links between the four identities.

The archive's unruly nature and politics appear in the works of different identities through their interest in:

- valuing of creativity and artistic practice beyond established systems of art (outsider art, peer-to-peer artist networks)
- free distribution of art (accessibility)
- co-creation, open artworks, multiple authorship
- destruction as creation (eg. allowing the loss and change of art via 'fatalistic' modes of distribution, ephemeral gestures, or by returning them to the landscape).

Your Digital Archive Box

This Digital Archive Box comprises a selection of documentation and artwork (with links to optional further reading if you wish to explore more) from different stages of the Attic Archive and projects described in the Introduction, kindly provided from the collections held at the [University of Dundee Archives](#), the [National Library of Scotland](#), and, [Artpool Art Research Center](#), and with the artist's permission. We will use some of these materials in the workshop so please spend a bit of time freely browsing through the material reading/looking at works as you wish. The workshop will be a collaborative exercise in imagining a potential future for the Attic Archive on an open-source online archival and curatorial platform to allow continuing engagement with the works that is sympathetic to its playful unruliness.

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Peter Haining discusses Pete Horobin's work and the Attic Archive, DATA Attic, Dundee, 2005.

Video by Judit Bodor and Roddy Hunter.

<https://vimeo.com/643398894>

Pete Horobin,
37 Union Street,
Dundee.
Scotland.

Dear Whoever-you-may-be,

You have been chosen by fate to receive a piece of art
This gesture from me to you does not obligate you in
any way. If you are pleased by the aesthetics of
the work and thereby preserve it I will have achieved
more than a gesture.

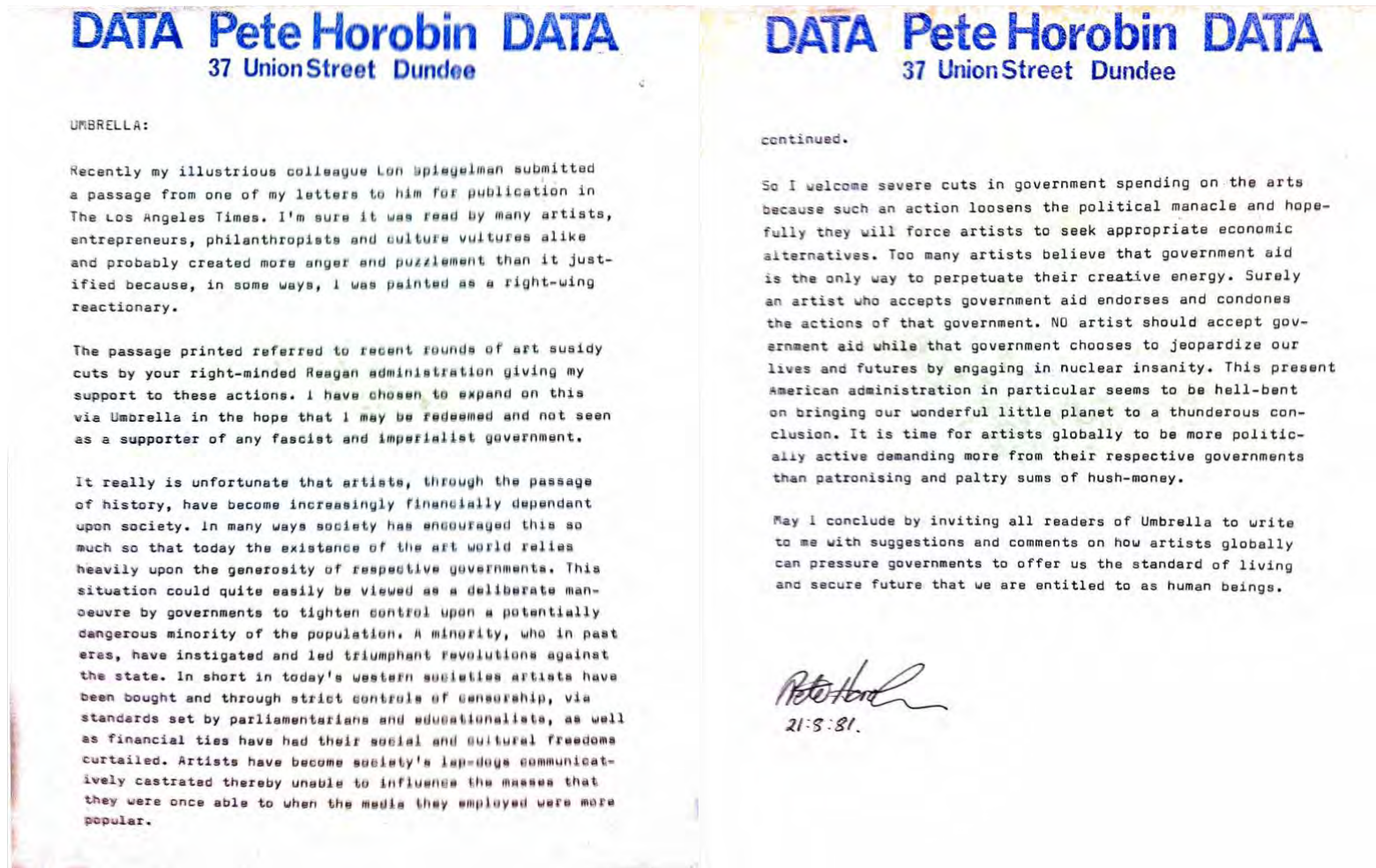
Yours faithfully,
Pete Horobin.



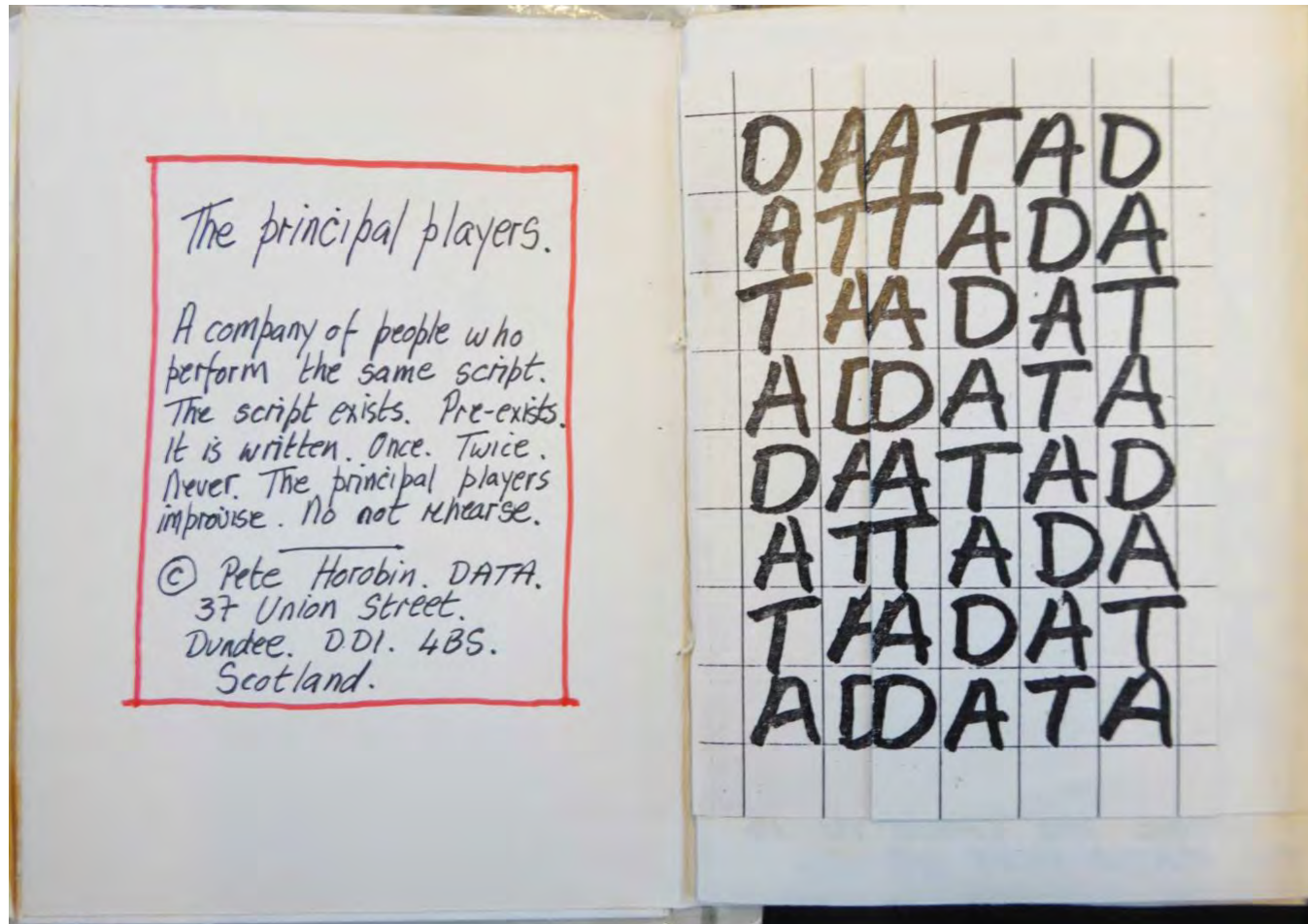
Pete Horobin, 'The Accessibility of the Art Object', 1977-78.

Unsent artwork and letter. University of Dundee Museums, purchased with grant
aid from the National Fund for Acquisitions administered by National Museums
Scotland.

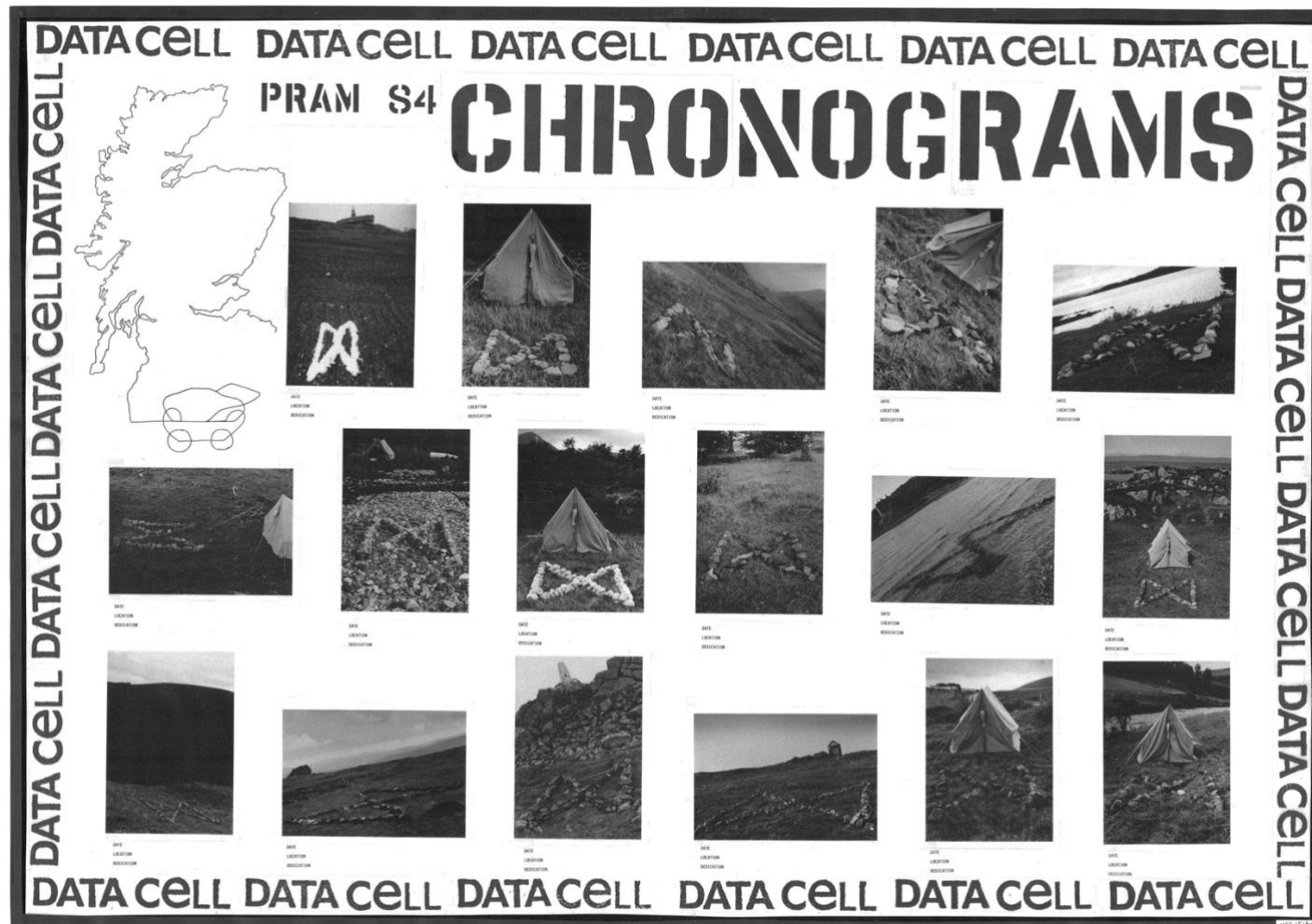
Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Pete Horobin, Letter to Umbrella, 21.5.81. The Attic Archive at Artpool Art Research Center, Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History, Budapest.

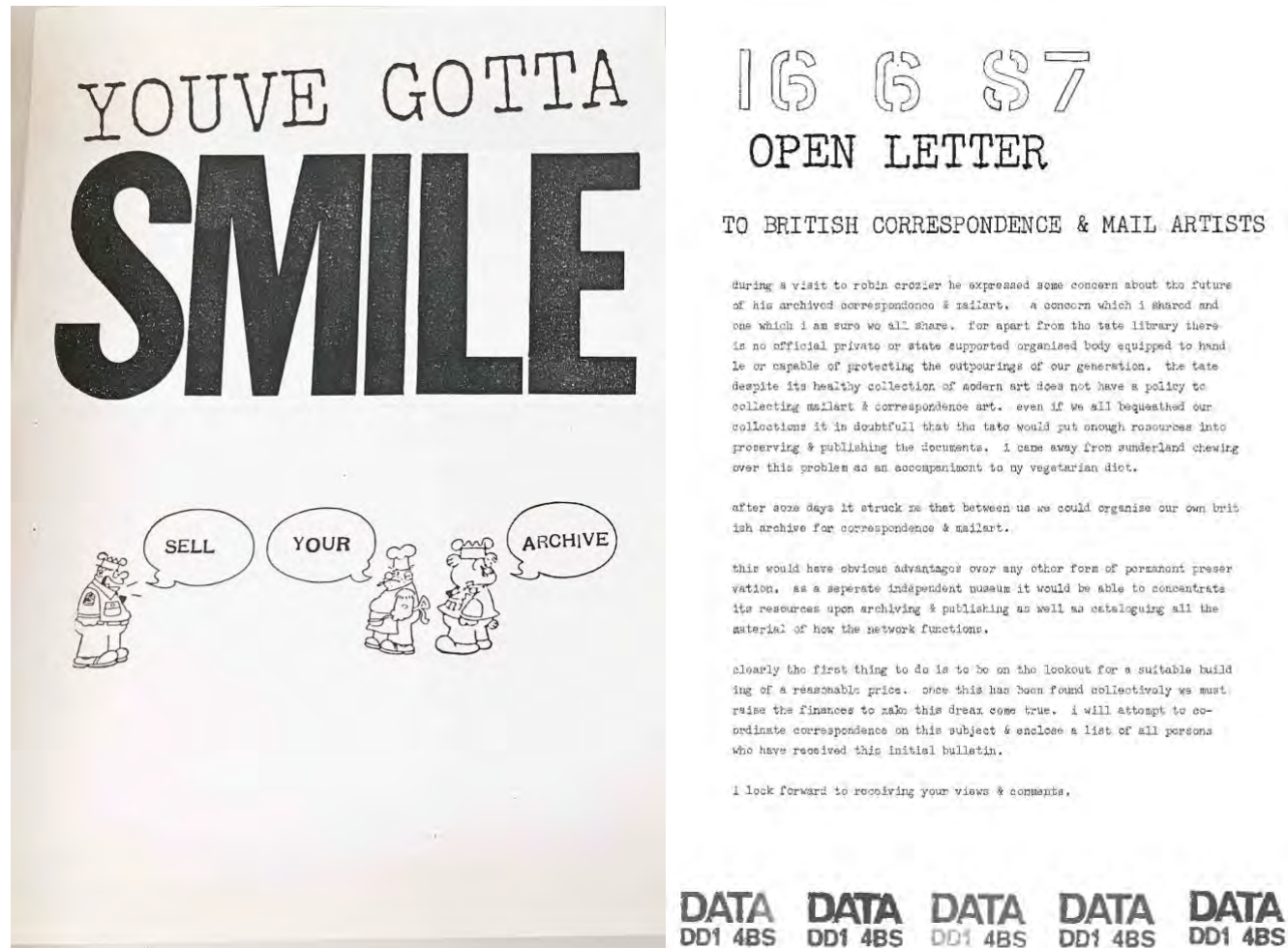


Pages from Pete Horobin, 'The Principal Player' (unpublished), 1981. A5 size book with a script sent out with blank pages inviting other artists in the Mail Art network to fill the pages with their own scripts for The Principal Player.
The Attic Archive at Artpool Art Research Center, Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History, Budapest.



Pete Horobin, 'Chronograms'. PRAM: Year of Freedom, 1984. Original photo positive set on acetate in The Attic Archive at Artpool Art Research Center, Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History, Budapest.

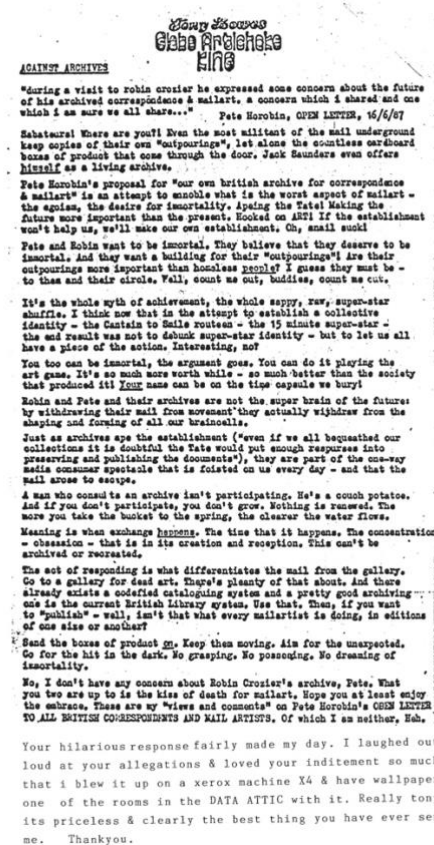
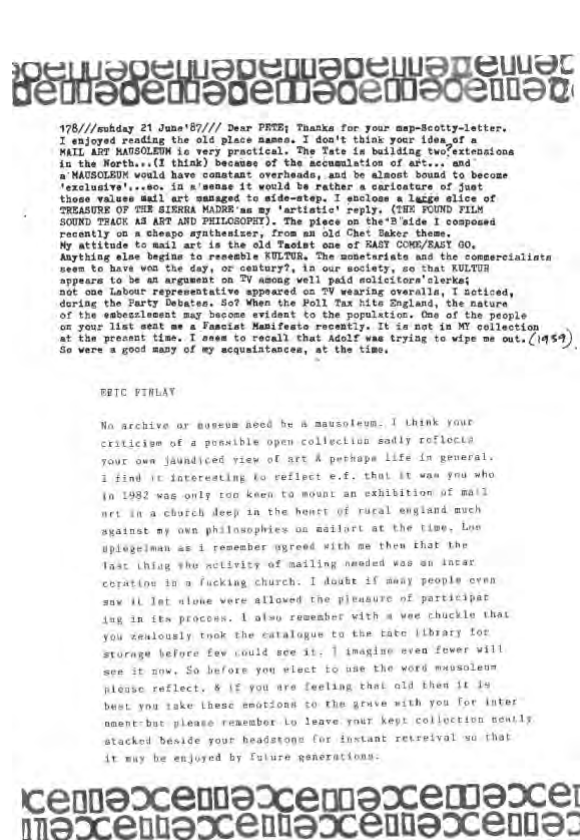
Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Pete Horobin, 'Open Letter', SMILE (at Archives), 1987. (unpublished), Call out for multi-authored magazine.

The Attic Archive at Artpool Art Research Center, Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History,
Budapest.

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation: Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Pete Horobin, 'SMILE, at Archives', 1987. (unpublished) Examples of responses to Pete Horobin's 'Open Letter'.

The Attic Archive at Artpool Art Research Center, Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History,
Budapest.

See also: TENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE, "[Smiles](https://www.idioideo.nl/Smiles)". 2021. [Idioideo.Pleintekst.NL](https://www.idioideo.nl/Smiles).

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL

TENT DATA TENT DATA TENT

NAME *PETE HOROBIN* PLACE *OS60 345454*
PULSE *60* TIME *07:44*
TEMPERATURE *35.9* TEMPERATURE *12*
BLOOD PRESSURE *110/78* BAR PRESSURE *1050*
MOOD *depressed tired apathetic tense nervous*
active relaxed contented happy elated
STOOL *08:01 medium.*
WEATHER *broken grey-blue cloud with light wind. a changeable day ranging from clear blue, sunny morning sky to grey, cold, showery afternoon sky.*
FOOD *breakfast: 2 oatcakes with honey. darjeeling. Lunch: 2 boiled egg pieces, creamed rice with brambles, a slice of bread with honey fruit tea. Afternoon: a mars bar. Later: 2 pieces of Shortie. darjeeling.*
ACTIVITY *photo tent, take notes from confessions of a surgeon. repair tent, help Kenny with his last spiral, make lunch, sit & chat. 14:00 leave to walk to Port Ellen. see Kenny onto the ferry. return to tent at 16:00. have tea, write notes.*

NAME *PETE HOROBIN* PLACE *OS60 345454*
PULSE *54* TIME *18:22*
TEMPERATURE *36.7* TEMPERATURE *12*
BLOOD PRESSURE *118/84* BAR PRESSURE *1048*
MOOD *depressed tired apathetic tense nervous*
active relaxed contented happy elated
STOOL
FOOD *evening meal: egg noodles with a vegetable stock cube & a hard boiled egg, a cheese piece, skewer, dates & rhubarb with creamed rice. Supper: 2 oatcakes with honey, herbal tea.*
ACTIVITY *cook & plan travel itinerary. eat, check maps & skew rhubarb with dates. eat, write, eat. 22:12 prepare for bed.*

cell e brates
SCOTLAND SCOTLAND SCOTLAND

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL

TENT DATA TENT DATA TENT

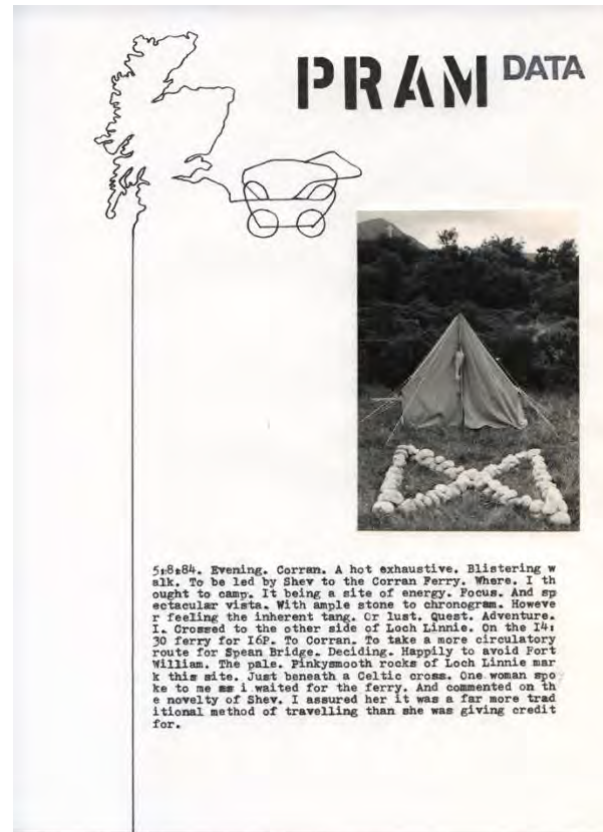
NAME *PETE HOROBIN* PLACE *OS45 737835*
PULSE *59* TIME *07:34*
TEMPERATURE *35.7* TEMPERATURE *9*
BLOOD PRESSURE *116/82* BAR PRESSURE *994*
MOOD *depressed tired apathetic tense nervous*
active relaxed contented happy elated
STOOL *08:38 firm.*
WEATHER *grey with light rain & moderate wind. a showery morning with sun but clearing to give a clear sunny afternoon with light wind.*
FOOD *breakfast: prose with honey & powdered milk, a piece of Shortie. darjeeling. Lunch: fish chips. Water: a mars bar. Afternoon: 1 1/2 scones with marg. darjeeling.*
ACTIVITY *photo tent & pack up. 09:17 more on in rain & take the forest track from West Bogen by Glenkinnan to Moss side. then walk B-roads by Mill of Cammie & Bridge of Feugh into Banchory arriving at 13:10. eat, visit the post office & shop. leave at 14:30 & walk out by Woodend & Chumhalloch to camp by the B50 Burn at 16:05. have tea. Read the Glasgow Herald & do quick crossword.*
NAME *PETE HOROBIN* PLACE *OS38 727993*
PULSE *62* TIME *18:22*
TEMPERATURE *35.9* TEMPERATURE *5*
BLOOD PRESSURE *122/86* BAR PRESSURE *1012*
MOOD *depressed tired apathetic tense nervous*
active relaxed contented happy elated
STOOL
FOOD *evening meal: mustard seeds fried in margarine then a large tin of macaroni cheese & cheese added. a piece of bread. Supper: 2 1/2 scones with marg. drinking chocolate.*
ACTIVITY *cook & start large crossword & eat, write, study maps. eat. ponder crossword. 21:33 prepare for bed to read.*

cell e brates
SCOTLAND SCOTLAND SCOTLAND

Pete Horobin, 'Data Sheets: Year of the Tent', 1989.

The Attic Archive at Artpool Art Research Center, Museum of Fine Arts – Central European Research Institute for Art History,
Budapest.

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Pete Horobin, 'Data Sheets,' Year of Freedom, 1984, and the pram – painted golden – with chronograms exhibited at University of Ulster, Belfast, 2006 as part of *I Confess I Was There: Art, Archives and Locations[s]* curated by Sarah Pierce, Julie Bacon and Declan McGonagle.

See also Dickson, Malcolm. 2007. ["Peter Horobin". Review in MAP Magazine.](#)

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Installation view, *Moving Images from the Attic Archive*, 19 Mar–18 Apr 2010, Cooper Gallery, University of Dundee [curated by Laura Simpson].

See also Baxter, Jonathan. 2010. "[Moving Images from the Attic Archive](#)". Review in *MAP Magazine*.

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Installation view, *Pete Horobin: DATA*. Street Level Photoworks, 20 April–3 June 2012. [Curated by Malcolm Dickson]

Photo: Alan Dimmick.

See also: [Mulholland, Neil. 2012. "I Do Not Belong, I Participate: Daily Action Time Archive". Neilmulholland.co.uk](http://neilmulholland.co.uk). An article was published to coincide with the show.



Marshall Anderson, 'Wilderness', c1994

The Attic Archive collection at University of Dundee Archives.

See also an example of Anderson's writing: [Anderson, Marshall. 1998. "A Quality Cinema Experience". *Variant 2* \(6\): 21-22.](#)

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



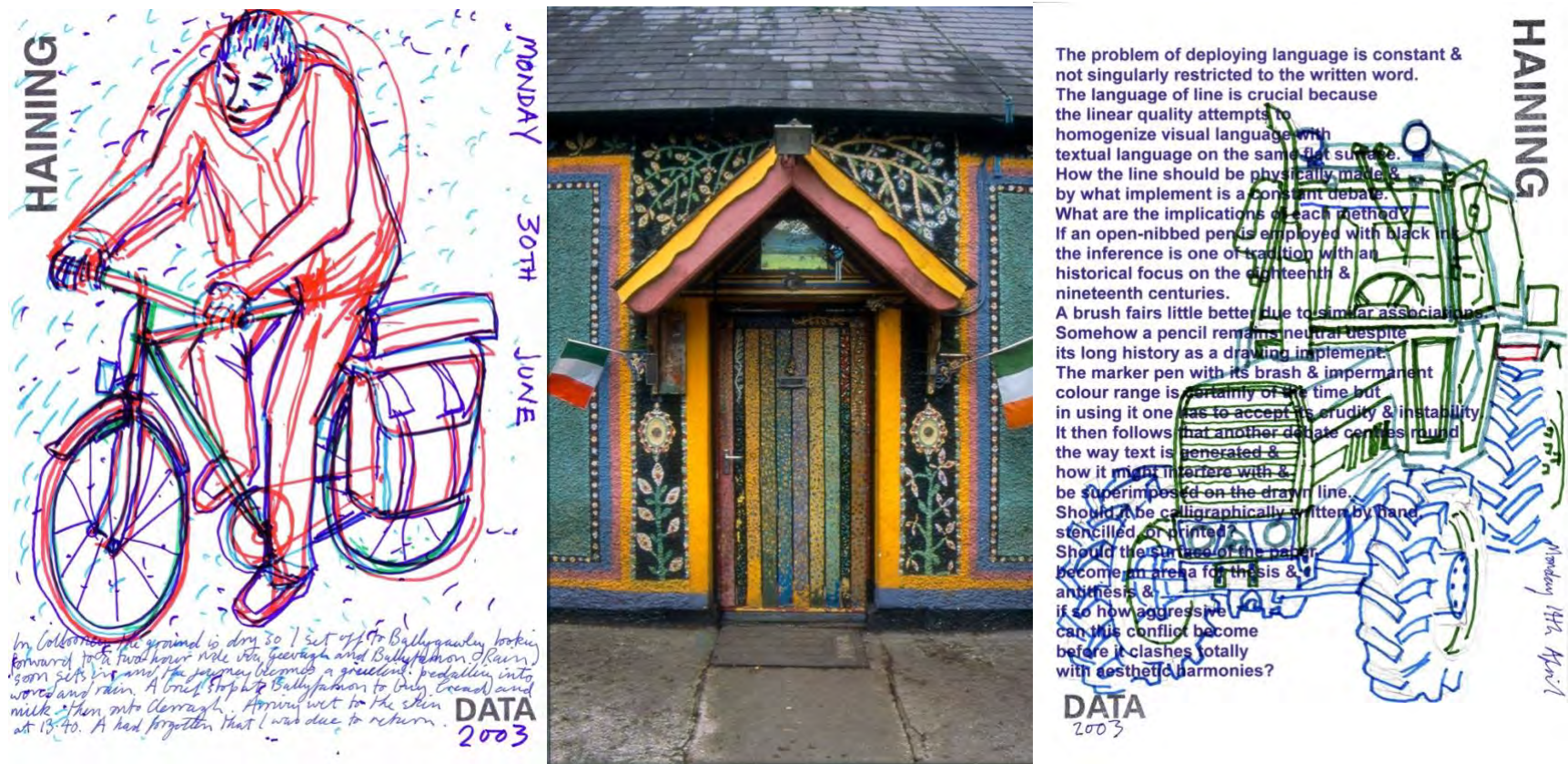
Marshall Anderson's Journal. Drawings, essays, notes. Portfolio covered in blue, red, green and gold tartan, 1994. The Attic Archive collection at National Library of Scotland.



Lynne Nealon: Decorated coffin. Exhibition by Women Artists in Dundee. Roseangle Gallery, Dundee. [A project started by Marshall Anderson and finished by Lynne Nealon when Peter Haining was in Ireland], c.2000-2001.

The Attic Archive at University of Dundee Archives.

Curating Living Archives Workshop #4: Resisting Recuperation:
Articulating the unruly politics of artists' archives through open-source practices



Peter Haining, Drawings and a photograph of Pat Lawlee's decorated cottage in County Cork. 'HIBERNIA (Haining's Irish Biketour in Eire & Round Northern Ireland (Arts)', 2000–2005.

The Attic Archive at the National Irish Visual Arts Library, Dublin.



ae phor aitch, 'T4 Terrain', 2015, *YouTube*.

The Attic Archive collection at National Library of Scotland

See also: [Stefan Szczelkun: 'T4 – a multimedia work by Ae Phor 2015'.](#)