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“Interpretive Seeing”: Art in the Archive

By

Meryl C. Crayton

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Meryl Crayton
July 21, 2011

“Interpretive Seeing”: Art in the Archive

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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Meryl C. Crayton
July 2011

Abstract

According to recent historical research trends, the iconography within art offers researchers new insight into past events, behaviors, and ideologies. Images tend to capture aspects of the past absent from textual records. Paintings and drawings have been employed by the United States army, past political leaders, and Western explorers to record the surrounding social, political, and/or physical environment. And, paintings often carry ideological arguments and critiques on the surrounding political and economic environment. These art records are creations and participants in the surrounding socio-political environment. As institutions of collective memory and preservers of public documents, archives are obligated to preserve and promote the documentary nature of the iconography within art. This thesis built upon studies in archives (Canadian and American), history, art history, and content-based image retrieval to argue that documentary art belongs in archival repositories. By accepting the documentary contributions of art, archivists serve to expand the documentary record and enhance our understanding of the past.

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Introduction

George Caleb Bingham, commonly remembered as “The Missouri Artist” and as politician and writer, claimed that he rendered historical records of nineteenth century Missouri, not art.¹ He painted scenes picturing the fur trade, festivals, riverboats, and the electoral process. More than documenting life in Missouri, Bingham applied his art as political criticism. One such painting, *Order Number 11*, illustrated the enforcement of the Order², and its forceful removal of civilians from their homes. He countered criticism of the piece:

Art being the most efficient hand-maid of history, in its power to perpetuate a record of events with a clearness second only to that which springs from actual observation, I sometime since became impressed with the conviction, that, as one of its professors, I could not find a nobler employment for my pencil, than in giving to its future, in its delineations, truthful representations of extraordinary transactions indicative of the character which oppressed and impoverished large numbers of the best citizens of our State during our late sectional war.³

¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 104.

² Order Number 11 is part of a larger history of conflict between pro-Union Kansans and pro-slavery Missourians. The tension escalated into the Lawrence Massacre, and finally Order Number 11. In July 1863, Brigadier-General Thomas Ewing confined the wives and female relations of Missourian guerrilla forces in prisons and commandeered dwellings; the collapse of one dwelling (George Bingham's) killed 5 women on Aug. 13th 1863. The Lawrence Massacre followed 8 days later (150 Kansans were murdered). In response, Ewing issued Order Number 11 on August 25th which depopulated “the entire border area under his command...” Through it, grain and hay were confiscated or destroyed over four counties. “The Union troops...felt no remorse in looting the empty houses, nor did they flinch when the fires they set to crops spread to the vacated dwellings.” Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 187-191. Sarah Bohl adds that the Order gave Union soldiers and Jayhawkers (Kansas guerilla forces) the justification to loot and burn before residents had vacated their homes. Sarah Bohl, “A War on Civilians: Order Number 11 and the Evacuation of Western Missouri,” *Prologue* 36 (Spring 2004): 47-48.

³ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 202.

Later in life, George Bingham revealed the motivation behind his art lay in his drive, “to perpetuate a record of events [and to]...give due warning to posterity.”⁴ The art piece narrates the depopulation and destruction of four counties in western Missouri. Throughout the scene, groups of civilians are shown loading up their possessions into wagons and leaving the area by foot and by wagon. In the foreground a patriarch, encircled by his family, argues with a Jayhawker, who reaches for his pistol. Two young women are positioned into poses of supplication towards patriarch and Jayhawker. The mother lies unconscious in the arms of an African-American woman, while another young woman cries over the body of her husband. In the background, Union soldiers confiscate abandoned buildings as plumes of smoke mark the destruction of land and crops.⁵ Tying the foreground and background together is a wagon train, so long that it disappears into the horizon. The art cultivated by the Missouri artist merges recorded observation with socio-political commentary as much as any of the textual records occupying the vaults of archival repositories. And yet the documentary character and historical contributions of art pieces much like *Order Number 11* remain largely unnoticed by archivists and unremarked by literature in the field.

In recent years, archives have refined the definition of records beyond paper to encapsulate oral, photographic, digital, and audio-visual materials. Increasingly, scholars

⁴ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 5.

⁵ In formulating the above description, I drew from Bingham’s own narrative of the figures in the scene related by Nancy Rash. Of interest, also, is the fact that Bingham portrayed the Jayhawkers as the chief instigators “abetted by federal troops.” Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 194.

have applied oral and visual materials in supplementing, or at times replacing, textual records. However, the documentary value of another form of the pictorial record, art, or more specifically drawings and paintings, has been ignored by mainstream archival collection practice. Art, though not a mirror image, functions as commentary, visual statements, on past events, activities, and persons, like Bingham's *Order Number 11*. Military officers, trained in topography, have left behind visual documentation of the American West and the natives who inhabited the land. Genre painters in America played with vernacular speech and popular stories to merge image with language in order to visually relay their social commentary to the general public. Artists also unknowingly documented mundane features of society (such as which pieces of clothing go with others, the popularity of dogs as pets, the presence of women on the streets) that are absent from textual records.

Art galleries⁶, preoccupied with the development of art styles, cannot be relied upon to highlight the documentary nature of drawings and paintings. Art galleries are more concerned with art movements than the historicity of iconography. Furthermore, access is a secondary concern for many art galleries and art museums. Andrew McClellan writes, "public access is always paired with a commitment to preserve objects for posterity, and if obliged to compete with each another...preservation will always win out. In a sense, then, museums serve a notional future public as much as real visitors...these tendencies are

⁶ In referring to art galleries, I also mean art museums. Chris Whitehead describes "a schism between...the art histories...researched and taught in universities...and...those presented in museums, which involve rather different discourses – on creative genius..., on rarity and economic value, on workmanship, materials and technique, on style and on artist's biographies." Chris Whitehead, "Visiting with Suspicion: Recent Perspectives on Art and Art Museums," in *Heritage, Museums, and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Gerard Corsane (New York: Routledge, 2005), 107.

especially pronounced in art museums where the objects collected are rare and valuable.”⁷ If the objective is increased access to and visibility of the iconography within art and its historicity, documentary art is better suited to the archive building. That is not to say that archives should work against museums and galleries, but rather that they should work with the larger heritage community to preserve another function of art (i.e., to inform and to document). As Geoffrey Yeo has noted, all records, nontextual and otherwise, perform multiple functions.⁸ The function of every archive is to preserve and house the technologies which seek to record information. As many paintings and sketches perform this very task, archives are obligated to acknowledge the documentary nature of art records in mainstream collection policy and seek out ways in which to integrate them with the textual, oral, audio-visual, electronic, and photographic records already held in such repositories.

Some will contend that art is unreliable and subjective, and unsuitable to archival repositories. I would like to take a moment to point out that archives have expanded their collections to include all sorts of media in more recent years, from audio-visual records to photographs to oral histories. Firstly, many of the obstacles associated with paintings and sketches have been addressed by archivists as they process photographic materials. Like paintings and sketches, photographs are not perfect mirror images. Many of them have been staged or manipulated to prove a particular point or social message; for instance, the staging

⁷ Andrew, McClellan, “A Brief History of the Art Museum Public,” in *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium* (Malden: Blackwell Publisher co., 2003), 2.

⁸ Geoffrey Yeo writes, “Records managers and archivists...who believe that if the objects we encounter are records they cannot simultaneously be information products, library books, museum artifacts, or works of art, underestimate the complexity and richness of the world in which we live and work.” Geoffrey Yeo, “Concepts of Record (2): Prototypes and Boundary Objects,” *The American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 142.

of bodies in Civil War photographs, or the exaggerated grittiness of urban cities by those working towards urban reform.⁹ But if you cross examine them carefully and correctly, they can be very useful.¹⁰ Secondly, archivists and scholars need to reorient their perception of paintings and sketches, from purely aesthetic objects to recorded visual observations of past societies. Thirdly, many of the criticisms directed at art question the reliability of paintings and sketches. By reliability, I mean the truthfulness and relative trustworthiness of the content held within the record. This can be resolved largely through learning how to read the visual. All sources, written or otherwise, require some source scrutiny, or some reliability tests. This topic will be broached further in chapter three. The point is not that art or any other record is above scrutiny, but that paintings and sketches are of value to historians and other scholars, and belong in the archive. R.R. Bernier argues that paintings, much like text and language, attempt to establish order over the world, seek to create order through the visual: “And just as language was understood to reflect such a rational and logical consistency between itself and our experience of the world...painting was to perform a similar task.”¹¹ Archives house technologies that record information, ranging from paper to audio recordings. Though unconventional, paintings and sketches also record information and we simply need to learn how to access the data.

⁹ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Princeton Hall, 2004), 64-85.

¹⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 25.

¹¹ R.R. Bernier, “The Subject and Painting: Monet’s “Language of the Sketch”,” *Art History* 12, no. 3 (September 1989): 313.

At its heart, this thesis questions the definition of the archival record. One of the assumptions, which this paper battles, is the notion that art and fact are in conflict. In his study, Geoffrey Yeo favors the definition of the archival record as, “*persistent representations of activities, created by participants or observers of those activities or by authorized proxies.*”¹² By defining archival records as representations, Yeo highlights the limitations of a record to capture events, ideas, and activities. He writes, “The activities that records represent are gone; records allow us a picture of them, created or authenticated by those who were present when the activities occurred, but it is still necessarily an imperfect picture.”¹³ This definition of archival records, not limited by media formats, encompasses the paintings and drawings presented in chapter one. *Order Number 11*, for example, was created by George Caleb Bingham who personally experienced the aftermath of the Order issued by Brigadier-General Ewing. However, the painting is only a representation or surrogate of the activity. Yeo writes that every category or community of practice possesses a prototype and boundary objects. For archives, the paper document is the prototype and all other records have a graded membership according to their distance to that prototype. On the subject of art, Yeo opines, “Those seeking objectively “accurate” reproductions are likely to dismiss other nonphotographic art works, but if a work depicts an activity that the artist observed, there is still a sense in which it is a record of the activity concerned...Paintings and drawings made

¹² Geoffrey Yeo, “Concepts of Record (1): Evidence, Information, and Persistent Representations,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Fall/Winter 2007): 337.

¹³ Geoffrey Yeo, “Concepts of Record (1): Evidence, Information, and Persistent Representations,” 339.

by observers are boundary objects...but they are records, too.”¹⁴ The most helpful definitions of archival records are those which encompass a multiplicity of functions: records as memory, information, and evidence. Bruce Dearstyne offers this definition: “Records are extensions of the human memory, purposefully created to record information, document transactions, communicate thoughts, substantiate claims, advance explanations, offer justifications, and provide lasting evidence of events.”¹⁵ From Yeo’s definition of records, I have constructed my own definition of documentary art: it is representational art which records, consciously or unconsciously, past ideas, activities, and/or environments fashioned from direct observation and/or participants in the displayed subject material.

In researching this topic, I have examined old archive journals (mostly *The American Archivist* and *Archivaria*) along with readings from art history and history. The topic first came to me after discovering a handful of articles on the subject of documentary art written between 1961 and 1994. Most of them had either been published in a Canadian journal or been applied to Canadian art. There seemed to be a need for research on documentary art in the American archive. My limited educational background in art and art history also made this topic an attractive one; ironically, it reflects my educational background in art, art history, history, and archival theory. Having only a few American archival articles to work from, I used the theory in Canadian archival articles and merged it with examples of

¹⁴ Geoffrey Yeo, “Concepts of Record (2): Prototypes and Boundary Objects,” *The American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 140.

¹⁵ Dearstyne quote in Mark A. Green, “The Power of Meaning: The Archival Mission in the Postmodern Age,” *The American Archivist* 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 44.

American art found in the fields of art history and history. I also took the liberty of applying archival theory concerning photography to my topic.

I have not found any specific reason for the exclusion of paintings and drawings from American archives. Ann Marie Przybyla notes, “Archives can assume custody of artworks, as demonstrated in a session titled “Art in Archives,” presented in 1999 at the sixty-third meeting of the Society of American Archivists...by archivists from the Amon Carter Museum and the Carnegie Museum of Art/Andy Warhol Museum.”¹⁶ The Amistad Research Center, holding the archive for the American Missionary Association, contains over 400 artworks in its holdings. The Archives of American Art, as well, actively collects artist papers and artworks. The Still Picture Division of the National Archives and Records Administration holds photographic prints of art pieces among its photographic collections. While the acquisition of paintings and drawings may not represent mainstream archival collection policy, the existence of the art in archival repositories and the reality of art’s documentary qualities require attention in American archival literature.

Of course, the inclusion of art in Canadian archives is largely a consequence of the development of the total archives system in Canada. In 1882, Dominion Archivist Douglas Brymer articulated his dream for the future: “My ambition aims at the establishment of a great storehouse of the history of the colony and colonists in their political, ecclesiastical,

¹⁶ Ann Marie Przybyla, “The Museum Archives Movement,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 3.

industrial, domestic, in a word every aspect of their lives.”¹⁷ This vision has manifested itself into the total archives system in which private and public records are collected, in a diverse array of documentary formats. One of the causes for this development, as highlighted by Wilfred Smith, was the lack of other national cultural institutions at the time of the Public Archives’ inception: “there was no National Library until 1953 and no historical museum until 1967.”¹⁸ The opposite is true for the American archives: the first historical society was created in 1791 and the first public archives in 1901. The National Archives did not emerge in the United States until the 1930s.¹⁹ Certainly, the circumstances surrounding the early development of the Public Archives in Canada (now Library and Archives Canada) have shaped the activities of the archival repositories in Canada and their understanding of archival records. This may explain why documentary art is not featured strongly in American archival literature. However, this does not alter the fact that some art is documentary, or that documentary art belongs, in some form, in American archives.

The structure of my thesis is centered on three fundamental questions: How is art documentary (the issue)? Why should archivists concern themselves with this topic or how is documentary art archival (How is this issue a problem for archives)? How can archivists bring documentary art into their repositories (and recommended solutions)? The last question

¹⁷ Wilfred I. Smith, ““Total Archives”: The Canadian Experience,” in *Canadian Archival Studies and The Rediscovery of Provenance*, ed. Tom Nesmith (Metuchen and London: The Association of Canadian Archivists and the Society of American Archivists, 1993), 136-137.

¹⁸ Wilfred I. Smith, ““Total Archives”: The Canadian Experience,” 146.

¹⁹ Randall C. Jimerson, “Documents and Archives in Early America,” *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005): 236.

can be divided into two parts. The first segment discusses how to determine reliability and how to read art. The second portion suggests how art can be brought into archives. All of the suggested courses of action encourage archives to collaborate with other heritage institutions rather than work against them. Kenneth Foote has argued that archives are part of a larger heritage community: “Each particular institution may sustain a representation of the past quite specific to its institutional mandate, but these representations can be interrelated.” This thesis suggests that art galleries and museums are unconcerned with iconography, and proposes that archives are the best suited to preserving and relaying the value of iconography. Together museums and archives could preserve the aesthetic and the documentary functions of art. Moreover, these suggested courses of action do not require archivists to abandon or reconstruct traditional archival principles (i.e., original order, provenance, and contextual description). Each question represents a chapter in this thesis. In broaching these three questions, I touch on the topics of visual literacy, defining documentary art, determining reliability of art records, and collaboration between memory institutions. I say touch on, because my primary concern remains the value of documentary art and its place in archives – all of these other topics are merely tools/avenues for supporting that argument.

In writing on this topic, I have examined theory in both Canadian and American archival journals. Canadians have more experience with the documentary value of art, and so their theories are very useful. However, my thesis is concerned with American archives and an American audience, so I have attempted to draw my examples from American sources. I

have also dealt with theory from primarily four disciplines: archives, art history, content-based image retrieval, and history. Understanding the value of art to historians – a large portion of our users – was essential in establishing the value of iconography within art to archivists. Naturally I needed a basic grasp of different artistic genres and styles in order to understand the documentary attributes of this medium, as well as the challenges that it presents to scholars as a resource.

My thesis, though not a subject that American archival literature has spent much time on, does build upon a handful of articles written in the profession. Barbara Craig and James O'Toole, in their publication, "Looking at Archives in Art," encourage their colleagues to turn to the iconography in art to better understand all of the nuances of documents and their functions in society.²⁰ My thesis attempts to take this idea further. I suggest that not only can we learn a great deal from art, but that our users – particularly historians – serve to benefit from the study of the iconography within art. Who will provide these scholars and professions with these records, remembering that art galleries are completely unconcerned with this side of the art record? Art galleries are only interested in how artworks fit into the development of particular art styles and movements.

Some archive professionals have written on the multimedia image of the archive. Ellen Fried encourages the public to see that the National Archives holds audio-visual materials, photographs, sound recordings, and electronic records along with the more

²⁰ Barbara L. Craig and James M. O'Toole. "Looking at Archives in Art," *The American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 98&125.

traditional textual documents.²¹ Fried urges a revised image of the archival repository: “for the first time, we have the opportunity not only to demonstrate the variety of materials we hold but also to show how these media can be integrated with each other and with textual records to better tell our nation’s stories.”²² Why should documentary art (acknowledged by many historians as a valuable historical resource) not be accepted alongside photography as an archival pictorial material?

Considering that this is a topic neglected by American archivists, I have relied heavily upon Canadian archival literature and applied those theories to American archives and art.²³ Brian Osborne contends that, as artists are members of a particular society, art provides a reflection of various past societies: “art should be regarded as a documentation and an interpretation of the society which it is a part and upon which it provides commentary.”²⁴ I agree with this evaluation but expand it. The value of art to scholars especially lies in art’s ordinariness; the captured details of the everyday that people of the time took for granted. The unconscious recording of those pieces of data make them more reliable than others.²⁵ Both the unconscious recording of details and the deliberate documentation of past

²¹ Ellen Fried, “More Than Paper,” *Prologue* (2004): 44.

²² Ellen Fried, “More Than Paper,” 44.

²³ There are examples of art outside of the United States in my thesis. But the examples of art are drawn mostly from American art and artists.

²⁴ Brian S. Osborne, “The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 41.

²⁵ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 90-92 & 97-99.

communities and events afford paintings and sketches scholarly worth and documentary qualities. Eva Marothy suggests that, as art galleries are preoccupied with the development of art and not the historical data within art, archives have a duty to preserve documentary art. She describes art as “undiscovered sources of information.”²⁶ Hugh Taylor proposes that paintings specifically should be embraced as archival materials. He writes that the definition of art as aesthetic is a construction of the Renaissance period, and that we should define art as, “the product of a craftsman who has learnt the business as a professional or amateur painter, much as fine writing was learnt from the writing master.”²⁷ He concludes that archivists should do away with the assumption that masterpieces belong in art galleries and the second rate art in archives, and challenges us to better define the roles of the two institutions. Art then is a creation of society, a forgotten form of communication, and the responsibility of archives.

Considering that the Still Picture Division of the National Archives contains reproductions of art, this is not as foreign an idea as our literature would suggest. My thesis has taken the theories from Craig’s and O’Toole’s article and used them to question mainstream American archival selection and the definition of the archival record, as well as merged Canadian archival theory with American art and archives. My intention is to prove the value of sketches and paintings to American archives, and to argue that archivists should make these materials more visible and accessible to our users as documentary records. In

²⁶ Eva Major Marothy, “The Place of Art in the Study of History,” *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 131.

²⁷ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 421.

other words, I argue that art should be part of the mainstream collection practice in the archive profession, and that documentary art needs to be discussed more extensively in American archival literature.

I begin by addressing how and why documentary art is a historical commentary on the past, and what I mean by the term documentary art. The second and third chapters tie the issue of documentary art to archives. The second chapter explores how documentary art is archival, and the third examines the ways in which art can be merged with materials already held in archives.

Chapter One:

Records of the Past within Art

Recently, historians and other scholars have acknowledged the contributions of art to the historical record. This development is largely owing to the ascension of the “new history,” and decline of the scientific approach to history writing. The term alludes to a particular approach to history and is part of the larger postmodern movement. Hugh Taylor identifies the new history as, “seeking pattern and process in a field rather than cause and effect...”¹ It encourages scholars to examine all aspects of the past, as opposed to the old method of focusing on politics and great men. The new history disputes the conviction that, through scientific method, historians can discover *the* truth about the past; rather it advocates that there are numerous truths and historical narratives, all equally valid. In turn, this new history has precipitated the birth of new sub-fields within history; studies of gender relations, of sexuality, of society from the bottom up, and of material culture are but a few of the studies that have emerged in recent years.

Archives, as well, have grappled with the changes introduced by the new history, or postmodernism. As historians have questioned the scientific approach to history, archivists have questioned the image of neutrality, impartiality, and invisibility in the profession. Joan

¹ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 419.

Schwartz asserts that the traditional archival principles are constructions of nineteenth century culture. She writes, “His [Jenkinson’s] notion that archives furnished evidence that was untainted, unmediated, impartial, innocent, and authentic, echoed the conviction of a host of nineteenth-century photographers and art critics who assigned to photographs a comparable role...”² Others question the identity of records as possessing one fixed meaning or one creator. Eric Ketelaar contends that archivists are “boundary keepers” who dictate which records are archival. Through the simple action of selection, archivists add new contexts and meanings to the records.³ The record is not static but an ever changing and evolving construction. Furthermore, the assumption that some records, transactional records for example, are honest and impartial has been rejected by postmodernist archivists. Mark A. Green clarifies, “there is no universally valid conception of “truth” that transactional records or other forms of documentation can transmit, only multiple truths.”⁴ Whereas some in the profession resist the changes tied up in the postmodernist movement, Terry Cook encourages the field to see postmodernism in the archive as a rebirth: “Postmodernism, by contrast, requires a new openness, a new visibility, a willingness to question and be questioned, to

² Joan M. Schwartz, ““Records of Simple Truth and Precision”: Photography, Archives, and the Illusion of Control,” *Archivaria* 50 (Fall 2000): 38.

³ Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives: The Meaning of Archives,” *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 136. Tom Nesmith also discusses how records are both content and context. Some of a record’s meaning originates from the creator, “but most of what makes a record intelligible lies outside its physical borders in its context... Archivists, who do so much to shape this context, therefore share in authoring...” Tom Nesmith, “Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives,” *The American Archivist* 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 31-32.

⁴ Mark A. Green, “The Power of Meaning: The Archival Mission in the Postmodern Age,” *The American Archivist* 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 52.

count for something and be held accountable.”⁵ The idea of using art to contribute more stories to the documentary record reflects these definitions of records and archives; it questions the conventional function of art, and embraces the multiplicity of meaning inherent in records and archives.

Alongside the emergence of this new approach to history writing and the discovery of new sub-fields, is the call for unconventional forms of documentation. Hugh Taylor observes that, “Textual records have been supplemented and at times even replaced by the whole range of oral and visual media...”⁶ A demand has arisen for information about segments of the population (women and the illiterate, for instance) that have not always been well documented by textual records. Historians are delving into all types of documentation in order to study their subjects. Already many historians have acknowledged the contribution of visual records to the profession. Historical journals, such as the *American Historical Review*, regularly print reviews of art publications and articles that utilize visual documents.⁷ Theodore Rabb voices the impetus behind the historian’s interest in art: “The historian must come to see painting, sculpture, architecture and music as a vital expression of a period’s feelings...And he may realize that by looking at an artist’s work, he can come to appreciate those feelings of an age that go beyond thoughts and words.”⁸ Indeed, the traditional paper

⁵ Terry Cook, “Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 28-35.

⁶ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 419.

⁷ Eva Major Marothy, “The Place of Art in the Study of History,” *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 134-135.

⁸ Rabb quote in Eva Major Marothy, “The Place of Art in the Study of History,” 135.

record is limited in its ability to disclose the religious beliefs of individual villages during the English Reformation or the clothing of average American women between Independence and Civil War or cultures of Native Americans in the West prior to Expansion. When the people we study left few textual documents, where do historians search for their information?

Paintings and drawings retain a great deal of information in this regard.

So, then, historians have responded to the compulsion of these new studies to look in the unconventional places for insight into the past. In turn, archivists must meet the demand for alternative documentary media, most especially documentary art. Already art has proven itself of immense value to studies investigated by a number of historians from divergent sub-fields. Images reveal pieces of past societies and behaviors which previously eluded scholars. For example, street scene images, “show what kinds of people are expected to be visible in public in a given period and culture.”⁹ Gender historians may look to these scenes to ascertain the degree to which women were involved in the street culture at a particular time in a certain culture, and by so doing, draw conclusions about gender activities and roles.¹⁰ In some cases, images are the only or most honest resource left to historians. Lisa Tickner has examined imagery of the suffrage campaign and summarized that, “the visual record is likely the only relic of the strongly verbal and anecdotal culture of misogyny that prevailed in late Victorian and Edwardian times.”¹¹ Peter Gay, in his publication *The Bourgeois Experience*,

⁹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 108.

¹⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 108.

¹¹ Eva Major Marothy, “The Place of Art in the Study of History,” *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 135.

which investigated nineteenth century sexuality, relied heavily upon paintings and sculptures to fill in the holes left behind by textual records.¹² Social historians study images of houses and their interiors in their research on the family and its position in society, while landscape paintings are scrutinized by historical geographers.¹³ Paintings persist as the primary resource for research performed by costume historians,¹⁴ and historians of fashion look to art to determine the proper clothing combinations and which trends traverse extensive geographical distances.¹⁵ Historians, then, comprise a large segment of the professionals who value the informative character of art. And this is only a sampling of the numerous sub-fields that exhaust this medium as historical resource. Historians, however, do not monopolize the application of art as historical records.

Biologists, for example, look to art for some enlightenment on the evolution of specific species.¹⁶ Images have also proven invaluable in the reconstruction of buildings long gone.¹⁷ Peter Burke writes that Warsaw (destroyed in 1944) was rebuilt with the help of old

¹² Eva Major Marothy, "The Place of Art in the Study of History," 135.

¹³ Eva Major Marothy, "The Place of Art in the Study of History," 135.

¹⁴ Eva Major Marothy, "The Place of Art in the Study of History," 135.

¹⁵ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 81.

¹⁶ Eva Major Marothy, "The Place of Art in the Study of History," *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 135.

¹⁷ Linda Barnickel, "A Firm Foundation: Archival Research and Interpretation at Historic Sites," *Archival Issues* 27, no.1 (2002):13.

prints and Barnado Bellott's paintings.¹⁸ This has been, in fact, a regular practice in the reconstruction of buildings long gone. According to Burke, "Architectural historians make regular use of images in order to reconstruct the appearance of buildings before their demolition, enlargement or restoration: old St Paul's Cathedral in London (before 1665), the old town hall in Amsterdam (before 1648) and so on."¹⁹ Of particular value are architectural drawings which were considered essential to the building projects at their inception. However, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they were relabeled as art and preserved for their aesthetic beauty but little else.²⁰ More recently, architects and preservationists among others have recognized their historical worth and utility.²¹ Nancy Carlson Schrock opines, "Original drawings and specifications would save an architect hours of work and produce a more authentic restoration."²² In some cases, the visual record of the building is all that is left of it.²³ But these records preserve not only a past image of the building, but its purpose and place within the community: "visual documentation is essential

¹⁸ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 85.

¹⁹ Burke, 85. Pictures also preserve long-gone landscapes. Jay Cantor writes that the New England landscape, between the Revolution and the Civil War, is vastly different from the modern-day New England landscape. Much of the forest growth was a product of industrialization in the mid-19th century and not present in post-Revolution New England. Jay E. Cantor, *The Landscape of Change: Views of Rural New England, 1790-1865* (Sturbridge: Old Sturbridge Village, 1976), n. p.

²⁰ Nancy Carlson Schrock, "Images of New England: Documenting the Built Environment," *The American Archivist* 50 (Fall 1987): 480.

²¹ Nancy Carlson Schrock, "Images of New England: Documenting the Built Environment," 475 & 483.

²² Nancy Carlson Schrock, "Images of New England: Documenting the Built Environment," 483.

²³ Nancy Carlson Schrock, "Images of New England: Documenting the Built Environment," 497.

to trace the patterns of change over time, to place individual buildings within the context of their surroundings, to show interiors and how structures were used. Postcards, advertising art, and photographs in particular provide this type of documentation...”²⁴ Images, then, are the remnants of past persons, communities, ideas, animals, and buildings. Scientists, historic preservationists, and numerous historians have unlocked the historic value of artwork.

Having established *why* art is valued as historical records, and *which* professionals apply them to their research, it is essential to enumerate *how* art records can be wielded as historical resources. Some of the more worthwhile art documents are the ones intended to document their surroundings and to convey information. The visual reports authored by military officers as part of survey missions, Western expeditions, and war campaigns fit well into this category. The military actively sought to train their officers in the skills of visual recording. Officers were trained in drawing and painting and, like Brigadier General Seth Eastman, were disciplined as topographical draughtsmen.²⁵ Brian Osborne notes that the officers were required, “to turn out drawings of landscape features, defenses, and enemy dispositions.”²⁶ In survey voyages, historian Geoff Quilley notes, the naval officers practiced the “visual technology of surveillance and control” through the panoramic vista and coastal

²⁴ Nancy Carlson Schrock, “Images of New England: Documenting the Built Environment,” 493.

²⁵ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 172-3.

²⁶ Brian S. Osborne, “The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 42.

profiles to relay important navigational details.²⁷ However, these artists preserved more than topographical details and enemy defenses. They captured the landscapes of the early American West, the various native cultures that pervaded the unexplored Western territories, the political and economic realities of past societies, past ideologies, and the lives of sailors and soldiers serving in and out of war.

During the HMS Pallas's survey voyages, Second Lieutenant Gabriel Bray rendered a number of visual accounts in conjunction with his written reports. The reports relate, not only the topography of the West African coast, but also information on the British commercial empire and the ideological debates linked to those commercial activities in the 1770s. Included in Bray's sketches, apart from the studies of life aboard ship, are a number of coastal profiles.²⁸ Geoff Quilley states that: "Bray's drawings on the Pallas, which must be considered in conjunction with his official duties of compiling reports and providing naval protection to British trade routes, may...be taken as a small but significant rendering of the British commercial empire in the Atlantic."²⁹ Gabriel Bray sketched coastal scenes of the forts which illustrated the thoroughly neglected state of the British forts. In one particular sketch, the only signifier of the British identity is one lonesome Union flag, as the native

²⁷ Geoff Quilley, "The Lie of the Land: Slavery and the Aesthetic of Imperial Landscape in Eighteenth-Century British Art," in *Representing Slavery: Art, Artefacts and Archives in the Collections of the National Maritime Museum*, eds. Douglas Hamilton and Robert J. Blyth (Aldershot: Lund Humphries in Association with the National Maritime Museum, 2007), 122.

²⁸ Geoff Quilley, "The Lie of the Land: Slavery and the Aesthetic of Imperial Landscape in Eighteenth-Century British Art," 122.

²⁹ Geoff Quilley, "The Lie of the Land: Slavery and the Aesthetic of Imperial Landscape in Eighteenth-Century British Art," 124.

environment overwhelmingly surrounds the fort.³⁰ By showing the poor conditions of individual British forts, Gabriel Bray was also commenting on the condition of the British commercial empire. Quilley avers that Bray's focus upon the forts connects the sketches to the political debates about commercial policy:

In contrast to Bray's other coastal profiles, which...focus on the contours of the topography for purely navigational purposes, all his profiles of the African coast include forts as their principle subject. They can therefore be considered in the context of the wider discussion about the British settlement of the West African coast. Indeed, Bray's work was of direct, material consequence to the metropolitan government debate over commercial policy for the West African coast and the slave trade in particular.³¹

Furthermore Quilley pin points a theme of loss that unifies the sketch with Governor John Roberts criticism on the management of the forts in *Account of the State of the British Forts* (and hence the larger political debate): "the loss, both commercial and national, of valuable trade in slaves, gold and ivory through neglect, incompetence or corruption; and the loss, or potential loss, of colonized property. It was also a loss of self, of authority and control, in an uncompromisingly hostile environment."³² The otherness of the African environment was felt as a serious threat to self-identity, and in a way, the British fort became a metaphor for

³⁰ Geoff Quilley, "The Lie of the Land: Slavery and the Aesthetic of Imperial Landscape in Eighteenth-Century British Art," 125.

³¹ Geoff Quilley, "The Lie of the Land: Slavery and the Aesthetic of Imperial Landscape in Eighteenth-Century British Art," 122-3.

³² Geoff Quilley, "The Lie of the Land: Slavery and the Aesthetic of Imperial Landscape in Eighteenth-Century British Art," 125.

that self-identity and the health of British Empire.³³ Bray's sketches merged his culture's anxieties and ideologies with the reality of the British slave trade in West Africa. They not only served to report on the British slave trade in West Africa, but also reflect the ideological arguments and fears of a nation.

Artists were also used as visual reporters by the military during periods of warfare. Even when governments made use of photography, as in the World Wars, they also found artists invaluable resources. Sergeant Albert Gold, war artist in the Second World War, commented on his responsibilities as visual documenter of the War: "The problems of the War Artist are special – and in this war unique. The forces are so vast and the character of the theatres so varied that an approach must be evolved which, while being of artistic value, will also constitute a historical record."³⁴ These war artists were apportioned a particular aspect of the War to chronicle: the human element.³⁵ War-artist George Biddle explained it best: "In drawing these boys I was not interested in mechanics of war. Machines bored me to death. I wanted the human faces, the suffering, the death..."³⁶ Elinor F. Morgenthau writes that the war-artists largely contributed to the accurate documentation of the War through recording the moments before and after the action: "If the artist concentrated on fighting action alone,

³³ Geoff Quilley, "The Lie of the Land: Slavery and the Aesthetic of Imperial Landscape in Eighteenth-Century British Art," 125-7.

³⁴ Sergeant Albert Gold quote in *The Army at War: A Graphic Record by American Artists, Paintings and Drawings Lent by the War Department to the United States Treasury Department* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 25.

³⁵ *The Army at War: A Graphic Record by American Artists*, 8-9.

³⁶ George Biddle quote in *The Army at War: A Graphic Record by American Artists*, 17.

leaving out all aspects of the months of preparation, the long voyages with their dreary transport hours, the landings of soldiers and supplies, if he omitted everything except the actual conflict, he would give us an entirely false conception of modern war.”³⁷ Peter Burke identifies the work produced by war artists as documentary in purpose: ““War artists”, sent to the field to portray battles and the life of soldiers on campaign...from the emperor Charles V’s expedition to Tunis to the American intervention in Vietnam, if not later, are usually more reliable witnesses, especially in details...We might describe works of the kinds...as “documentary art”.”³⁸ The war artists documented the activities of the army in and in between the moments of action, the individual faces that made up that army, and the foreign environments it struggled with.

Artists also preserved the landscape and inhabitants of the West prior to American domestication of the land and arrival of the railroad. Two factors tended to spur visual documentation of the West: 1. these officer-artists were directed to visual document as part of an exploration or survey team. 2. Nineteenth century American ideology dictated that Native Americans were a dying race, and the explorer-artists felt the pull to document them before they were gone. Seth Eastman and George Catlin fall into the second category. Motivated by the belief that Native Americans were a vanishing people, Brigadier General Seth Eastman spent his off duty time, while serving at Fort Snelling, to visually document the Chippewa and Sioux and their activities through sketches. By 1846, he had generated more

³⁷ *The Army at War: A Graphic Record by American Artists*, 10.

³⁸ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 19.

than 400 drawings and paintings (oil and watercolor). Most of the scenes depicted, according to Vivien Fryd, were fairly accurate, excepting the stereotypical presentment of a “savage” crying out in his triumph over his white adversary.³⁹ Likewise, George Catlin showcased more than 400 oil paintings and thousands of sketches in his exhibit (1837-52).⁴⁰ In total, Catlin’s art documented more than forty-eight tribes. When he promoted his art to Congress for purchase, he advanced his art as true testaments of the development and history of the United States.⁴¹

On the other side, John Mix Stanley falls into the first category: Stanley documented the surrounding physical environment and natives as part of military expeditions. He makes an appearance in Katherine Karpenstein’s study of the illustrations that accompanied reports on western expeditions and railroad surveys, between 1842 and 1862. These sketches feature drawings of the landscape and native populations that the explorer-artists encountered en route. Stanley served as draughtsman for Emory’s reconnaissance mission from Fort Leavenworth in Missouri to San Diego, California. The illustrations consist of, “scenes in New Mexico, views along the Gila river in Arizona, ruins of the Casa Grande in Arizona, and

³⁹ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 172-3.

⁴⁰ In 1837, Catlin brought together his artwork and artifacts to form his Indian Gallery which he travelled with to several capitals in the eastern United States and Europe. He was forced to sell these art pieces to pay debts in 1852. The Smithsonian’s Art Museum now holds Catlin’s original Indian Gallery.

⁴¹ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860*, 163-170.

some Indian portraits.”⁴² The contributions of these artists to the expeditions were greatly appreciated at the time and their art enhanced the knowledge base of the largely mysterious West. In an 1853 expedition, I. I. Stevens commended Stanley for his documentary contributions to the railroad surveys:

Besides occupying his professional field with an ability above any commendation which we can bestow, Stanley has surveyed two routes – From Fort Benton to the Cypress mountain, and from the St. Mary’s valley to Fort Colville over the Bitter Root range of mountains – to the furtherance of our geographical information, and the ascertaining of important points in the question of a railroad.⁴³

The visual records generated by these explorer-artists stand out in their objectives: to accurately document the terrain and the native inhabitants. They tell a great deal about the American landscape prior to large-scale settlement and construction, and leave us with visual records of Native Americans and their cultures. Both categories of artists stand out as documenters who immortalized the individual natives and unaffected territory they encountered through sketchings and paintings. Unlike others, these artist expositions reflect actual people and landscapes, not the manifestations of popular stories and overactive imaginations.

Outside of the military, another sort of visual documenter is the artist that captures moments of eyewitnessing. Peter Burke’s book, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, upholds that images preserve acts of eyewitnessing, the same as textual

⁴² Katherine Karpenstein, *Illustrations of the West in Congressional Documents, 1843-1863* (M.A. Thesis, University of California, 1939), 9.

⁴³ Katherine Karpenstein, *Illustrations of the West in Congressional Documents, 1843-1863*, 70.

or oral records: “The essential proposition this book seeks to support and illustrate is that images, like texts and oral testimonies, are an important form of historical evidence. They record acts of eyewitnessing...” Eyewitnessing artists endeavor to, “represent what – and only what – an eyewitness could have seen from a particular point at a particular moment.”⁴⁴ One of the better examples of this type of art is enmeshed in Eastman Johnson’s *Ride for Liberty*, which illustrated the flight of a slave family during the War Between the States. The text attached onto the back of the painting categorizes the painting as documentary – as an act of eyewitnessing. On the back is written: “a veritable incident in the Civil War, seen by myself.”⁴⁵ The inclusion of the text with the image transforms image into historical record.

Even with the art that seeks to document, there exist questions about the reliability and veracity of the image portrayed. Often times, it is the small details, overlooked by both artist and viewer, that historians find the most reliable.⁴⁶ Peter Burke elucidates, “images often show details...that people at the time would have taken for granted and so failed to mention in texts.” Paintings and sketches encapsulate details so ingrained in the social environment that artists and their contemporaries took them for granted as fact. Ironically it is these details, forgotten by the past’s documenters and artists, which are of immeasurable

⁴⁴ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 14.

⁴⁵ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 14.

⁴⁶ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 92-102.

importance to today's historians.⁴⁷ Images that depict gentlemen donning top hats in laboratories reshape our understanding of scientific research and how it was carried out. Whereas nineteenth century Irish cottages no longer survive, paintings have preserved the details of the contents of those cottages; so that we know that they held Irish turf beds. And the large numerical presence of dogs in David Loggan's engravings of Cambridge College informs historians about the role of dogs in early modern British society.⁴⁸ Often the most revealing pieces in images are the truths that the artists never intended to impart to their audience; the unconscious recording of the past.

Some of the art records, like the majority of records held in archives, are of value today for reasons separate from their original purpose. This is particularly true for the drawings and paintings that were created in railroad surveys in the early to middle nineteenth century in America. Though considered of little help to the construction of railroad tracks at the time, today the "splendid" illustrations accompanying the railroad surveys are of value to scholars, specifically biologists and historical geographers. California Congressman John C. Burch lamented that although the visual records depicted "highly colored pictures of the topography, accompanied by exact representations of the animals, birds, fishes, reptiles, shrubs and flowers found on the route...this did not demonstrate the practicability of a route,

⁴⁷ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 90-92. Also references following examples.

⁴⁸ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 32.

nor show the surveys, elevations, profiles, grades or estimates of the cost...”⁴⁹ Again, the unintended documentation of the surrounding landscape and wildlife has made these images into historical records of immense importance to today’s scholars.

Moving beyond the small details, some artistic projects embraced a theatre much larger than a singular event or person to encompass national debates and ideologies. Some images influenced society, and were applied to the co-building of particular social consciousnesses. They became a part of the national and regional debates taking part in the United States. By participating in debates, many of them partook in “the “cultural construction” of society.”⁵⁰ Peter Burke comments that this involvement in cultural identities molds the image into historical testimony: “Some of them were [produced for research purposes], as we have seen, but most were made in order to perform a variety of functions, religious, aesthetic, political and so on...For these very reasons, images are testimonies of past social arrangements and above all of past ways of seeing and thinking.”⁵¹ Images are conceived by society and for society and designed to both reflect that society and to influence the collective thinking of that society. Images are then both singular and pluralistic in their conception.

⁴⁹ Katherine Karpenstein, *Illustrations of the West in Congressional Documents, 1843-1863* (M.A. Thesis, University of California, 1939), 17.

⁵⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 185.

⁵¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 185.

Genre paintings and the art in the United States Capitol building embody two excellent examples of art employed in regional and national debates. Both used imagery to tell narratives that reflect the political, social, and economic environment of their time. Genre paintings in America, according to Elizabeth Johns, functioned, “in social spaces, working within the culture with the interactive and shaping power of jokes, plays, newspaper editorials, and political decisions. They, too, are created from and advocate positions of interest; they propose and undercut ideology.”⁵² Artist William Sidney Mount is the ideal representative of this medium and how it manipulated vernacular language to communicate abstract concepts and political criticism to viewers. Mount essentially devised a unique language, by merging speech with imagery, to converse with his viewers. Genre paintings seemingly depicted harmless uncontroversial scenes of everyday life, but in truth, conveyed popular anxieties over national issues and forced their audience to ask difficult questions.⁵³

William Mount’s painting *Farmer’s Nooning* beautifully encompasses the racial and regional tensions of mid-nineteenth century America. In the atmosphere of heightened anxiety over the slave issue in 1830s America and increased anti-slavery campaigning, Mount completed *Farmers Nooning*. The painting depicts three Caucasian men resting beneath a tree and a decently-dressed African-American asleep against a haystack as a white adolescent tickles his ear with a piece of hay. One of the Caucasian men works with a tool in preparation for work to recommence, while one sits with his back to the viewer, and the other

⁵² Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), xiv.

⁵³ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, 44-45.

lies on his stomach in the grass with his feet in the air. Elizabeth Johns comments, “Scattered through the scene are accoutrements for refreshment and tools for work, the most important of which is the scythe that hangs from the tree. But for this detail, the picture is a veritable idyll.”⁵⁴ Visible in the scene are symbols tied to the issue of slavery. The tam-o’-shanter, worn by the boy, is one object that was associated through conversation and written text with anti-slavery campaigns:

The tam-o’-shanter became a transparent reference to abolitionism. Because English and Scottish emancipation societies aided American reformers...Graphic artists adopted the tam-o’-shanter, shorthand for Presbyterian, Scottish, and thus foreign-influenced opinions about emancipation, as a derisive visual symbol of the movement, and virulent political caricatures showed blacks wearing Scottish caps talking about “bobolition.”⁵⁵

The boy then was directly linked to the abolitionist movement. The act of tickling the slave’s ear alluded to the vernacular phrase “Ear Tickling” that “meant filling a naive listener’s mind with promises.”⁵⁶ This is a reference to warnings at the time, “that slaves were so naturally prone to violence that they might riot if their “ears were tickled” with the impossible dreams of freedom.” Finally, the scythe hanging in the tree transports the sweet scene of black man and child into a politically charged image: “the scythe hanging on the left points to a “harvest”. This harvest will be reaped by these yeomen... Will the harvest be one of bounty,

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, 33-34.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, 34.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, 35.

or, if the abolitionists are allowed to pursue their mischief, one that the nation will regret?”⁵⁷ Though clearly commenting on the anti-slavery movement and Mount’s personal fear of the consequences, the image could be taken as an innocuous scene of American rural life. By constructing his own visual commentary on the political and economic environment in America, William Sidney Mount participated in the regional and national debates of his times. We know that he translated popular puns and vernacular into the visual, and that these paintings were meant to be read and understood, much like the stories, songs, and pamphlets circulating at the time. In this way, genre artists and their art became part of the debates in the past and now represent today’s historical records of past ideas, happenings, and arguments.

Art was also employed by politicians to support and reinforce national political ideology. In the nineteenth century, art in the Capitol building constructed a particular narrative about the development and national history of the United States. Vivien Fryd elaborates that, “The political strife that spanned the nineteenth century affected the subject matter and meaning of some artworks in the Capitol, and conversely, some artworks influenced statesmen in their debates. In effect, the art functioned as a stage on which congressmen acted out national tensions and conflicts.” Particular art works can be linked to the topics – “Indian removal, westward expansion, tariffs, states’ rights, and sectional discord over slavery” – discussed in Congress at the time, and even to individual politicians who guided the construction of the art pieces. Indeed, “particular statesmen and federal employees

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, 35-36.

– presidents, cabinet members, architects, superintendents of engineering, congressional committees, senators and representatives –” took a personal interest in directing the topics and meanings of particular art pieces. As such, the art work at the Capitol is representative of those individual politicians but also is reflective of the tensions and arguments indicative of nineteenth century political culture. However, it should not be imagined that the art represents divergent opinions. The Capitol art of the nineteenth century is representative of the dominant political ideology of the time. So much so that the Capitol art built a mythic image of an ideologically unified nation: “The art in the Capitol served to legitimize congressional legislation and to coalesce divergent beliefs into a state-supported, unified ideology to create a semblance of consensus in the face of intractable political and sectional divisions...a mythologized American history...”⁵⁸ The marginalization and myth of the vanishing Indian, for example, became a dominant theme in Capitol art that supported the narrative of the white male’s victory over the untamed wilderness and its “untamed” inhabitants.⁵⁹

Often times, the Native American is pictured as on the border or in the shadows, and hence, is the vanishing American. The picturing of the vanishing American relays the belief at the time that the Native Americans could not survive in this new America: “Already in the 1820s, when the Rotunda reliefs were created, many Americans believed the Indians would

⁵⁸ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 4. The above paragraph reflects the ideas of Vivian Green Fryd, not my own.

⁵⁹ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860*, 157-9.

become extinct because of disease, warfare, and the influence of the transplanted European culture.” This belief was articulated throughout literature and poetry, as well as in history books. The vanishing American imagery, however, while reflective of the nineteenth century American culture, was also imposed so as to support political agendas. The application of the vanishing American also served a political purpose: promotion of the Indian Removal Policy.⁶⁰ Art at the Capitol is reflective of the political environment and cultural beliefs of the nineteenth century. Though not useful in gauging the past realities and events of the previous decades, it does offer insight into the ideological history and political history of nineteenth century America. The notion that Native Americans were a vanishing race pervaded all levels of society, and posed the incentive for the documentation of them by historians and artists.

Art, then, has proven itself invaluable to varied professionals and disciplines with diverse research objectives. Having fleshed out the documentary nature of art (the what, how, and why art is documentary), I now turn to how and why archives should include art in their collections. The difficulty with art is that it can be both historical record and aesthetic object.⁶¹ Where should it go then? To the art gallery or the memory institution? One point that needs to be addressed is that this is not an either-or situation. Art can hold significant historical data while representing an important piece in the development of artistic styles.⁶²

⁶⁰ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860*, 157-159. The preceding sentences in the paragraph reflect Fryd’s ideas, not my own.

⁶¹ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 420.

⁶² Greg Spurgeon, “Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archives,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 67.

Though an argument can be made for the acceptance of all types of art, I recommend that archives target documentary art.

The issue with documentary art is that no standard definition exists for it. My thesis proposes that documentary art, best suited to archives, is representational art recorded by participants or first-hand observers. Already I have attempted to demonstrate the types of art that are documentary by looking at how art is historical document. The military's use of artists, the genre artists that communicate political and economic criticism via the visual, and the unintentional recording in the small details in paintings are all examples of art that documents. In the past, there has been the assumption that archives take in second-rate art, and art galleries showcase the masterpieces of the art world.⁶³ This dangerous understanding of documentary art is misleading. Documentary art cannot be designated by its quality or lack of sophistication. The best definition I have found is the one given by Greg Spurgeon. In summarizing the archival criteria that each record must meet, Spurgeon notes that documents must meet evidential value through strengthening, "our understanding, factual or emotional, of our country and its history. It must be seen as a statement of some reality."⁶⁴ When combined with Geoffrey Yeo's definition of archival records, documentary art can be defined as: representational art⁶⁵ which has been created by a participant or first-hand observer of a

⁶³ Greg Spurgeon, "Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archives," 67-68.

⁶⁴ Greg Spurgeon, "Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archives," 70.

⁶⁵ By representational art, I mean art which *intends* to represent or mirror some past reality. Abstract art is not representational art. Romanticized historical paintings superimpose a separate idealized image on a past event, but are not representative of an actual past event or reality. In other words, these make poor surrogates for past actions or events.

past event, environment, people, or reality. This definition is simple and broad enough that it can encompass a large number of genres within a range of artistic sophistication, while still excluding some artistic styles that may not be best suited for archives (i.e. abstract art or romanticized history paintings). Indeed, once art abandons the attempt to replicate some past reality or truth, it ceases to be historical document. Lastly, the simplicity and straightforwardness of the definition easily allows archivists to adjust it to be more exclusive or inclusive, and to fit the particular mission statements of their repository.

Chapter Two:

How Documentary Art is Archival

The relationship between art and viewers, and the general perception of art as aesthetic object, are, in large part, creations of the Early Modern world. But art has also been used to receive information and to convey opinions, as I have already shown. Hugh Taylor relates that, “art, as we know it, is of relatively recent origin, and as archivists we may do well to consider painting not as art in the nineteenth-century sense, since we will rarely deal in masterpieces, but as the product of a craftsman who has learnt the business as professional or amateur painter, much as fine writing was learnt from the writing master.”¹ Archivists must redefine art for themselves as documentation and traces of the past. Andre Malraux associated these art pieces, the non-masterpieces, as nothing more than, “a memory, a sigh or a story.”² This is, perhaps, the ideal starting place for redefining art in archives. The key obstacles to archives accepting art as a documentary medium lie in the misrepresentation of photography as a more reliable visual medium, and in the unwillingness to let go of the perception of archivists as passive and neutral collectors.

¹ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 421

² Malraux quote in Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 421.

Several assumptions shape how people, archivists among them, interact with art. One of these is the presumption that art is outside of reality. Hugh Taylor cautions archivists not to expect perfect mirror images of the past with any of their records. He warns that, “There are those who would argue that art and fact are in conflict, but this is true only if one restricts fact to a mirror image of reality, a goal as unattainable as that of “what actually happened” in historical research.”³ For instance, George Bingham’s *Order No. 11* was not completed until 1869, years after the event that is the subject of his painting. And Nancy Rash comments on his use of familiar or stock poses – the kneeling woman with her hands clasped together in supplication – that appeared in his and others’ earlier artworks.⁴ However, in recording the event, Bingham drew upon his personal observances and experiences: “The defiant encounter between the patriarch and the Union officer about to draw his pistol recalls the moments when Bingham himself had a pistol at his breast. The looting going on in the middle ground – of household furniture, quilts, paintings, and clocks – echoes the artists eyewitness accounts of robberies by Jennison’s men...”⁵ Despite the gap between the event and the painting’s creation, Bingham’s painting reveals personal observances and particular truths about the Missourian experience in the Civil War. The reality is that all records are composed within a particular format and engage in the selection and omission of information.⁶ Textual records

³ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 422.

⁴ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 195-198.

⁵ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham*, 195.

⁶ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 423-424. Joan Schwartz suggests that the act of photographing entails the “decision to preserve the appearance of a person, an object, a document, a

convey information through familiar textual forms and, “we...organize our thoughts around categories, stereotypes, and well-established concepts.”⁷ Taylor reflects that the image, “will convey and suggest truthful comment as perceived by the artist as observer, which is as much as we can expect from any observer.”⁸ Rachelle Ross, in her thesis on documentary art in Canadian archives, writes that the “fictional or stylistic elements” often “can be more telling. Fictional and inserted elements often highlight the important considerations of an age...” The problem, she writes, is that these stylistic elements “challenge some of the accepted notions of...“archival” art as more factual, representative, accurate, and descriptive in character, art as objective evidence, not subjective narrative.”⁹ Our tendency to associate archival record with impartial evidence hides the subjectivity which is present in all records, textual or otherwise.

The question is not so much is this image truthful, but how can we reach the truth the artist meant to convey? Or for archivists, how can we provide the correct context so that users may accurately read these visual resources? Archivists must step away from the assumption that textual records reveal the truth, and that art communicates pretty fantasies about the past. War-artist Aaron Bohrod summarizes the point best: “I have the feeling that in

building, or an event judged to have abiding value.” The same can be applied to any act of recording: a conscious decision is made to preserve one thing, and not another. Joan M. Schwartz, ““Records of Simple Truth and Precision”: Photography, Archives, and the Illusion of Control,” *Archivaria* 50 (Fall 2000): 19.

⁷ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 424.

⁸ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 421.

⁹ Rachelle Ross, “Art and Archives: Theoretical and Practical Definitions of “Documentary Art” in Canadian Archives” (Master’s Thesis, University of Manitoba/ University of Winnipeg, 2006), 94.

painting the war it is incumbent upon the artist to be to a great extent documentary...[But] an artist cannot help but bring to bear on everything he observes the sum total of his life's experience, great or limited. His seeing in every case is an interpretive seeing."¹⁰ Can not the same thing be said for all of the records in archives; that they are an "interpretive seeing"?

Another impediment which must be dealt with is the assumption that paintings are less realistic or reliable than photographs. This assumption is misleading and obstructs our ability to fully comprehend the informational attributes of paintings and sketches to the documentary record. In fact, some painters, going back to the thirteenth century, used projection devices to create more realistic scenes.¹¹ Recently scholars have discovered that artists used concave mirrors to project images onto a surface and then trace them.¹² Levine comments that, for example, curators at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, "now believe that Thomas Eakin's painting, "Sailboats Racing on the Delaware," and his 1885 masterpiece "The Swimming Hole," used Victorian projection devices, versions of candle-lit magic lanterns, to create collages that were traced using compass lines on a single canvas."¹³ Additionally, scholars have discovered the use of another type of projection device by explorer artists in the nineteenth century. Maritime artists of the Pacific Northwest coast, for

¹⁰ Aaron Bohrod quote in *The Army at War: A Graphic Record by American Artists, Paintings and Drawings Lent by the War Department to the United States Treasury Department* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 19.

¹¹ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Princeton Hall, 2004), ix -x.

¹² Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents*, ix-x.

¹³ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents*, ix-x.

example, also applied devices to their drawings and paintings to enhance the realism. During the American survey voyage (1836-1842), historian John Frazier Henry advances that the official artists on board, Alfred Agate and Joseph Drayton, and naturalist Titian R. Peale applied the camera lucida, a portable device, in strengthening the realism of their drawings and paintings. The camera lucida was, “an optical instrument consisting of a four-sided prism of glass with carefully measured angles, enabling the viewer to project a scene or object on a sheet of paper, on which it could then be traced. The device was of much help in producing drawings in which accuracy was important.”¹⁴ The importance of the projection device lay in the intent of the artists behind the use of the instrument; mainly that it was important to the artists to accurately report their observations to their viewers. Photographs were not the only visual objects that intended and succeeded in accurately reporting their observations.

Paintings and drawings can then be approached as documentary records. However, of the two, photographs are the visual records that have been admitted into the archives. Historians and archivists acknowledge the documentary contributions of photographs to those interested in the preservation of heritage and collective memory. Robert Levine writes that a photograph “is a document, just as is a diary, an old newspaper, a court decision, a property deed, or a last will and testament. Photographs in themselves cannot offer the final word on a historical argument, but, like other documents, can contribute to a historical judgment.”¹⁵ Indeed, photographs, like all other historical records, are no more than an

¹⁴ John Frazier Henry, *Early Maritime Artists of the Pacific Northwest Coast, 1741-1841*, 196.

¹⁵ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Princeton Hall, 2004), ix-x.

impression or “trace” of the past. However, when we bring these historical traces together they provide us with insight into past ways of thinking and seeing. Jeffrey Mifflin argues that images can enhance our knowledge of the past when integrated with other “traces” of the past. He writes that, “Examining historical photographs can open paths to improved understanding of the history of disciplines, including medicine. Images can be “read” and advantageously integrated with other historical “traces”.”¹⁶ The difference between my thesis and the arguments made by Mifflin and Levine and others already mentioned is that I argue that *paintings and sketches* are also traces of the past, and should be integrated with other historical traces. By now, the shared common traits of paintings and photographs should be visible: both, though at times applied in documentation efforts, are limited through their tendency towards subjectivity and the influence of the social and cultural environment upon their creators. Both are interpretive viewings of past events, environments, ideas, and persons. Both are carefully composed scenes.

The problem, however, is that there is an underlying prejudice that affords photographs a reputation as the more reliable and honest medium. Archivists have studied the limitations of photography and the biases of the medium. Some in archives, like Brian Osborne, have pushed archives to appreciate art as “well informed, accurately reported, and insightful” data.¹⁷ However, there still exists the fundamental belief that photography is a

¹⁶ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 32.

¹⁷ Brian S. Osborne, “The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 41.

window in the past, whereas art is fantastical. This misperception of photographic records hurts our reading of them. Historian Robert Levine readily acknowledges the limitations of photographs as documenters of the past. Every photograph is more than a random snap-shot of past moments. The photograph is actually the result of a number of elements coming together. Levine explains, “pictures may be cropped, subjects altered by lens angle or creative use of light... We know that most photographs, far from being literal reproductions, are actually contrived, as composed as a piece of writing.”¹⁸ Photographs, like paintings, endeavor to communicate certain truths or feelings to their audience; just as the art piece reflects the artist and patron, photographs reflect the person “behind the lens.”¹⁹ Furthermore, Mifflin tells that photographs are the result of more than technological elements working together. They are the consequence of the usual elements (the subject material, the artist/photographer, and the camera) but also, “other variables, such as who is or isn’t present, and the authority or influence they may have. The overall situation, as well as technology, frames the result. Angle, lens, speed of plate or film, moment chosen, and length of exposure shape what the camera records.”²⁰ Sander Gilman has written on medical history and how it has manipulated photography to create a narrative of progress. He states, “People in power... usually controlled the production of medical images and arranged for them to be

¹⁸ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Princeton Hall, 2004), 7.

¹⁹ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Princeton Hall, 2004), ix-x.

²⁰ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 34.

either accepted or discarded. Even when medical images were not accompanied by “overt analysis,” they were often still “manipulated” by selection to fit a “Procrustean bed” illustrating the “ever improving reality of medical care of the patient”.²¹ Photographs prior to, during, and after their creation have been carefully composed to present a particular message to the intended audience. They are not free from the constraints of culture and time period imposed upon all records.

Furthermore, at one time, drawings and paintings were preferable to photography. Lieutenant James H. Simpson, on the use of early photography in western expeditions, judged that, “The camera is not adapted to explorations in the field, and a good artist, who can sketch readily and accurately, is much to be preferred.”²² The understanding of art as more aesthetic than informative is a modern development, occurring around the eighteenth century with the onset of the printing press (or as early as the Renaissance). On this subject, Peter Burke wrote, “This essay is concerned with “images” rather than with “art”, a term which only began to be used in the West in the course of the Renaissance, and especially from the eighteenth century onwards, as the aesthetic function of images, at least in elite circles, began to dominate the many other uses of these objects.”²³ As with all other historical sources, historians must learn how to read them – interrogate them – correctly, so

²¹ Gilman quote in Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 59.

²² Katherine Karpenstein, *Illustrations of the West in Congressional Documents, 1843-1863* (M.A. Thesis, University of California, 1939), 34.

²³ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 16.

that they can draw out the useful historical information. With all records, archivists have to muck through the hidden agendas of the documents creator and the influence of a particular time and culture on the creator. However, despite these influences, photographs and other images are invaluable historical sources, if you cross-examine them correctly.²⁴

Archives, then, restrict themselves through indulging the assumption that art is ahistorical and less honest than photography. In terms of reliability, documentary art is comparable to photographs. But I would also argue that archives unconsciously deny the documentary nature of art because they still hold onto the older, passive role of archives. Visual records require archives to adopt more visual and active responsibilities. Jeffrey Mifflin contends that archivists must actively guide users' research in reading visual records. It could be argued that visual records require more attention than textual records.

Indeed, part of the problem may lie with how we see ourselves in our relationship with other memory institutions and our users. The concept of the active archivist – the archivist who embraces their shaping-influence over the records held in their repositories and over the users' interaction with those records – is not new to the profession, but we still seem to struggle with the concept. Traditional archival theory championed the imagery of the neutral, impartial gatekeeper-archivist who did not intervene in the record-making process. More recently, with the advent of postmodernism, archivists have acknowledged that through selection of records and the creation of access tools, such as the finding aid, archivists are creators of new contexts. Terry Cook writes, “the postmodern shift requires moving away

²⁴ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 25.

from identifying themselves as passive guardians of an inherited legacy to celebrating their role in actively shaping societal memory.”²⁵ Tom Nesmith contends that the older definition of communications as mirror objects has encouraged archivists to adopt a role of passivity and invisibility. To preserve the original meaning of the mirror objects, archivists acted as simple preservers and passive guardians. This imagery hides the reality of the archivist’s position of power: “enormous power and discretion over societal memory, deeply masked behind a public image of denial and self-effacement.”²⁶ The active archivist embraces his or her role as creator and storyteller, and strives for increased visibility and transparency.

Despite this apparent shift, archives and archivists still struggle with invisibility in the heritage community. Hugh Taylor has suggested that archives are often left behind when the topic of heritage is brought up.²⁷ In his study of heritage and archives, Taylor has argued that archivists often put too much focus on the content of textual records, and discarded the artifactual value of records.²⁸ This reflects, I would argue, the visualization of the archivist as “invisible.” He writes, “We see the documents we handle as simply providing reliable

²⁵ Terry Cook, “Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 29.

²⁶ Tom Nesmith, “Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives,” *The American Archivist* 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 27-32

²⁷ Hugh Taylor, ““Heritage” Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995): 9.

²⁸ Hugh Taylor, ““Heritage” Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” 9.

information in support of other material culture, and therefore materially “invisible”.²⁹ This was perhaps understandable when archives were simply defined as depositories for paper records, but we have moved on from that identity to one that holds more responsibility and visibility. Archivists are active in the preservation, access (both physical and intellectual), and selection of materials held in our repositories.

As archivists facilitate use of their records, they create new contexts for the records.³⁰ Indeed, the access tools function as surrogates for the actual records located in the repositories. Archives have also expanded their repositories to include formats beyond paper, visual records among them, which require the attention of an active archivist. Jeffrey Mifflin writes that archivists must go out of their way to provide the correct context for images, and actively guide users in reading the images accurately. He writes, “Archivists can (and should) use their special knowledge of the content and context of collections to offer insights in addition to orienting users to various research opportunities and options.”³¹ Archives no longer hold just paper records which support the objects housed in museums; they hold photographs, digital records, oral histories, and audio-visual materials alongside the more traditional paper records. We need to update our understanding of who we are in our

²⁹ Hugh Taylor, ““Heritage” Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” 9.

³⁰ Eric Ketelaar makes the argument that the transference of records into archives changes their meaning, and with each interaction with the records, archivists/users/creators alter the context of the records. Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives: The Meaning of Archives,” *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 136-138.

³¹ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 63.

communities, and how we relate to other memory institutions. Part of the issue, identified by Taylor, is that archivists are too intent upon the informational content of the documents and forget that documents are artifacts as well as boundless data: “It [the archival record] becomes an instrument for the conduct of affairs or relationships, as do the artifacts in museums.” Archival records – paper as well as visual, digital, and auditory – are extensions of ourselves and have impacted the lives of those around us.³² The invisible archivist is a myth, and the concept of a paper-only archive has been surpassed by the multimedia archive which has embraced the diversity of documentation formats.

Once archivists breakdown these two fundamental assumptions – art is unrealistic and archivists are invisible preservers of “boundless data” – they can then freely explore how art is historical and archival. Art, for one, is already present in archives, for example in the format of photographic prints in the Still Pictures Division in NARA. It is simply uncommon for archives to promote the concept of art in archives. But archives must accept their responsibility to promote the documentation captured in paintings and drawings. Art galleries, while they hold art and delve into the subject of art movements, will not convey the historical value of the iconography within art. It is the obligation of archives to preserve the historical value – the documentary value – of art; that is after all the domain of archives. Art is a form of documentation. Brian Osborne states it best: “art should be regarded as a documentation and an interpretation of the society of which it is a part and upon which it

³² Hugh Taylor, ““Heritage” Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995): 9-10.

provides commentary.”³³ This is a fact already acknowledged by former politicians, military officers, and other members of past communities, who implemented art in documenting progress in American society.

Archivists must acknowledge these past sentiments and acknowledge art as documentation, as these visual records were intended. Just as it is the duty of archives to preserve documentation of the past, it is their duty to archive art, in some form, which has documented the past. From working with photographic records, archivists know that images are not incompatible with archive principles. As traces of the past, paintings and drawings that document belong with other records of the past. In short, art belongs in archives because it has been recognized a valid documentation medium; because paintings and sketches are not fundamentally less honest than photographs; because archives are in the business of preserving records of the past; and because art records, when placed alongside other documentary media, enhance the historical record.

Despite the gap in archival literature that suggests the contrary, archives already contain art. There is a precedent for art in the archives. Truman Strobridge reported in 1961 that, “the Still Pictures Branch of the National Archives contains over 43,000 photographs, prints and film negatives of paintings, drawings, murals, sculpture, sketches and lithographs created by the section, the Treasury Relief Art Project, and the Public Works of Art

³³ Brian S. Osborne, “The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 41.

Project.”³⁴ Today you can visit the National Archives website and find the still pictures guide. The guide indicates that the Branch holds photographic prints of paintings ranging anywhere from a painting of John Paul Jones of the Revolutionary War to sketches of the early military to paintings of the fur industry in Alaska.³⁵ The concept of integrating documentary art into archival holdings does not require archivists to break from tradition. It, in fact, fits within traditional selection practices.

More importantly, documentary art belongs in archives because documentary art is not the domain of art galleries. Art galleries are preoccupied with the development of art styles, not the iconography within art.³⁶ Furthermore, documentary art is not out of the purview of typical archival responsibilities, as already highlighted. Barbara Craig and James O’Toole, in their article “Looking at Archives in Art,” asserted that archivists can learn a great deal about their holdings through examination of art and art’s portrayal of records and the record-making process. They write, “Studying the ways in which archival records have been portrayed in the visual arts tell us something important about how those records are perceived...If the stuff of archives is so routine as to be included in works of art intended to

³⁴ Truman R. Strobridge, “Art Documents in the National Archives,” *Art Journal* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1961-62): 106.

³⁵ Barbara Lewis Burger, “Guide to the Holdings of the Still Picture Branch of the National Archives and Records Administration,” accessed April 11, 2011, <http://www.archives.gov/research/guides/still-pictures-guide.html>.

³⁶ Eva Major Marothy, “The Place of Art in the Study of History,” *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 133.

depict other things, archives may indeed possess a deeper subliminal power...³⁷ How records were used, and how they became enmeshed in the identities of individuals can be captured and conveyed through paintings. Investigation of these images can provide contextual information in relation to documents housed in archives. Craig and O'Toole write, "Every bit of information about the contemporary settings for documents and writing also enriches the archivist's and user's experience of historical documents today. Enrichment, we argue, is sufficient justification for exploring art; that it also can be practical is a bonus."³⁸ So then, archivists can enhance their contextual understanding of the records they hold through examination of paintings.

My argument takes that conclusion a bit further: all scholars serve to benefit from examination of paintings and archivists must find ways of sharing these records with their users. Laura Millar's theory on the relationship between archives and memory further connects archival responsibilities to archiving documentary art. She writes that records are touchstones of the past, and archives are the tools through which memory becomes collective memory.³⁹ If we return to Andre Malraux's definition of the art of the non-masters – or documentary art – as "a memory," Laura Millar's theory serves to link documentary art to the archival duty to preserve heritage. She goes on to claim that the primary responsibility of an

³⁷ Barbara L. Craig and James M. O'Toole, "Looking at Archives in Art," *The American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 98.

³⁸ Barbara L. Craig and James M. O'Toole, "Looking at Archives in Art," 125.

³⁹ Laura Millar, "Touchstones: Considering the Relationship between Memory and Archives," *Archivaria* 61 (Spring 2006): 114-119 & 122.

archive is, “to seek out the records of its society and make those records accessible so that the society may use them not just to document events but also to interpret, shape, and articulate memories.” It is the duty of the archivist to seek out these recorded memories and bring them into the collective memory that archive repositories represent.

It should not be a surprise that some paintings and drawings represent recorded memories; especially when it is considered that past individuals turned to paintings and drawings to document and record. Indeed, past presidents, military officers, and government officials have also acknowledged the power of art as documenters. Former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt comprehended the ability of paintings to document in powerful ways. Throughout his political career Roosevelt expended public funds and his personal attention to artistic projects that meant to document and capture the might of the United States. According to William Rhoads, Roosevelt began, “in 1918, [when] for the first time in his career, he used public funds to sponsor art. He sent overseas Charles E. Ruttan, a naval aviator originally trained as an artist, to record the recent history of the Navy in some 144 works. Moreover, Roosevelt privately commissioned Ruttan to paint his own wartime adventure, crossing the Atlantic on a destroyer.”⁴⁰ Later Jonas Lie, an academic artist and friend of the Roosevelt family, campaigned for a federal commission to paint the great dams going up in the South and West. The President responded with firm approval, saying: “In 1917...I did that very thing for the Navy when I commissioned a young man by the name of

⁴⁰ William B. Rhoads, “The Artistic Patronage of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Art as Historical Record,” *Prologue* (Spring 1983): 6.

Ruttan...to paint our ships on duty in War waters. We ought to record the tremendous things we are doing.”⁴¹ These art works were designed to be records of the United States Navy, and the construction projects; to handle them as nothing more than aesthetic objects – of no value to today’s scholars – is disrespectful and presumptuous. That is how documentary art must be approached by archivists: as visual documents that have recorded past persons, ideas, or endeavors as faithfully as any other archival medium would.

Furthermore, as already mentioned, archives today hold a variety of media in addition to paper records. Whether or not a record is archival cannot be determined by medium. Ellen Fried urges her readers to convey to the public the modern image of the National Archives as a multimedia repository. She writes, “we have the opportunity to not only demonstrate the variety of materials we hold but also to show how these media can be with each other and with textual records to better tell our nation’s stories.”⁴² She then pushes archivists to promote the multimedia image of modern archives, and to demonstrate how these media may be used together. The only definition of archival records present in Fried’s article centers on the original function of the records: technologies that keep track of information for the federal government. She writes, “Just about every format used by the federal government to keep track of information is reflected in the holdings of the National Archives...You’ll find that they’re much, much more than paper.”⁴³ Having explored the application of art by the

⁴¹ Roosevelt quote in William B. Rhoads, “The Artistic Patronage of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Art as Historical Record,” 7.

⁴² Ellen Fried, “More Than Paper,” *Prologue* (2004): 44.

⁴³ Ellen Fried, “More Than Paper,” 47.

United States government and military, it should be clear that art fits within this definition of the archival record. Officers illustrated the Native Americans they encountered in the West. Franklin Delano Roosevelt employed artists to document the Navy, and the construction projects in the early twentieth century. Why should archivists exclude paintings and drawings?

Whether or not a record is archival is not determined by the medium to which they belong. Sarah Tyacke cautions that the definition of what is or is not archival is not medium dependent. She writes that the document can be, “film, sound, or whatever...it depends...upon the body that created it, not the medium...[it is archival] as long as it is an identifiable assembly of documents (objects) of whatever sort which derive from a body and which have not been rearranged.”⁴⁴ As long as provenance and original order are preserved, the medium is archival. The medium is not important, but the preservation of original order is. Indeed, Joan Schwartz advises that the archival value of images lies in maintaining a direct link between the image and the creating institution. She writes that, “archivists must recognize that archival value in photographs resides in the interrelationships between photographs and the creating structures, animating functions, programmes, and information technology that created them.”⁴⁵ Original order and provenance are at the center of archival theory. As long as the medium can be made to meet those principles, the records are archival.

⁴⁴ Sarah Tyacke, “Archives in a Wider World: The Culture and Politics of Archives,” *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001): 10.

⁴⁵ Schwartz quote in Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 61.

Archivists must leave behind the image of the archive as a paper repository. Archives are multimedia preservers, and archivists must put their energy into thinking of how these various documentary formats complement each other and fill out the historical record.

Indeed, Jeffrey Mifflin contends that images belong in archives alongside records from similar time periods and/or cultures. By placing images alongside textual, oral, digital, and audio-visual materials, archivists enhance the contextual information for all of the media. Mifflin advises, “Its proper place and most informed use is in context with other materials, integrated into a network of related historical traces, often including complementary texts, and sometimes artifacts, oral testimony, sound recordings, films, and videotapes.”⁴⁶ Images are historical traces, the same as textual records and oral accounts, and they must be integrated with all of the other historical records in order for us to fashion a more complete historical record. Hugh Taylor opines that pictures are historical statements, equal to other archival records in accuracy: “No other kind of relic or text from the past can offer such a direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times. In this respect, images are *more* precise and richer than literature [my italics].”⁴⁷ Paintings and drawings belong in archives, in some format, alongside the other forms of documentary statements. Together they form informational and contextual data about past communities.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 65 & 33-34.

⁴⁷ John Berger quote in Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 420.

Furthermore, art and other images on occasion are the only remaining historical traces of the persons who, “work with their hands [and who] keep few diaries, write few letters, keep few possessions through successive generations and, until recently, have seldom been the subject of the scholar.”⁴⁸ It is the obligation of the archivist to seek out any traces of the past. And the inclusion of visual records in archival collections is not a novel concept. Photographs have already been accepted into archives as documenters of the past that remains unremarked on by textual records. Paintings and drawings would only enhance the visual record occupying archive vaults. Jeffrey Mifflin writes that photographs of the medical profession “can contribute much to our understanding...not addressed by materials such as letters, diaries, administrative records, and journal articles. *If analyzed and used with appropriate cautions*, they can express elements of the history of medicine that are “rarely disclosed” elsewhere [my italics].”⁴⁹ Images grant access to the pasts other sources neglect; such as the “view from below, or of changes in sensibility.”⁵⁰ Peter Burke points out that street trading, on account of its “unofficial nature,” has not been well documented in textual records.⁵¹ However, pictures capture elements of their time – like street trading – that were so rooted into the day-to-day activities that it does not occur to the artist/photographer to *not*

⁴⁸ Greg Spurgeon, “Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archives,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 71.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 37.

⁵⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 185.

⁵¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 185.

document those elements. Images convey past social values and how preceding generations perceived themselves.⁵²

Robert Levine suggests that it is their “ordinariness” – the details about the activities, clothing and general appearance, physical surroundings, and accessories of everyday life – which re-makes pictures into historical documents.⁵³ And Jeffrey Mifflin agrees with this assessment: “Extant images often preserve a record of facts so mundane to contemporaries that they go unrecorded in written documentation... (Surgery, we infer, was a correct and dignified occupation, requiring a gentleman’s attire. We only know this because of the visual record.)”⁵⁴ Images should be included in the archive because they enhance our archival holdings. Images, paper records, oral accounts, and other vestiges of the past should all be integrated into one repository so that archives can provide users with as complete a documentary record as possible. Mifflin explains: “Photographs of wards can be used in conjunction with blueprints, architects’ reports, committee findings, and medical journal articles extolling the virtues of ventilation or spatial isolation of patients and decrying the effects of cross-infection.”⁵⁵ Images, as a unit, offer archivists and scholars an opportunity to not only fill in the blanks left behind by textual records, but also to experience the past in a

⁵² Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Princeton Hall, 2004), ix.

⁵³ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents*, ix.

⁵⁴ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 64.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 64.

new, more vivid way. Certainly, textual records are powerful in their own way; the Declaration of Independence is a testament to that truth. However, images capture former ideas, events, and persons in an evocative and powerful way that brings a realism to our experience of history, which is at times diluted when we interact with paper records.

Brian Osborne pushes archivists to see art as documentation and as a reflection of the artist's community. He writes that art, as a by-product of their society, should be regarded as documentation of that society.⁵⁶ As the artist is a member of a particular community, art is the product of that community and its social conventions. He adds that it is the emotional element of art that archivists struggle with: "The artist, therefore, not only records such "facts" as setting, scene, characterization, and events, but also expresses such "values" as ambience, attitudes, emotions, and values. It is these subjective dimensions which are, so often, unapproachable realities for the historical researcher."⁵⁷ Art contains not only the message the artist intended to convey to his/her audience, but also the unconscious values and prejudices of the society of which the artist is a member. Elizabeth Johns contends that paintings are both passive and active objects in their communities: "They [paintings] too, are created from and advocate positions of interest; they propose and undercut ideology."⁵⁸ In nineteenth century America, genre painters, like William Mount, applied typing as part of the

⁵⁶ Brian S. Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 41.

⁵⁷ Brian S. Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal," 44.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), xiv.

process of co-building social consciousnesses and hierarchies of power. Typing, as defined by Elizabeth Johns, involved parceling out and denying power to particular groups of people, by typing certain persons as the heroic military leader, or the self-serving tradesman, or as the village fool, or as the “other”. By denying power to particular individuals or groups and by encouraging “viewers to invest in [particular] social hierarchies,” the artist took part in the construction of social consciousnesses and hierarchies of power.⁵⁹ But the artist only used popular imagery and concepts already imposed on society and art to act out this typing. The tam-,o-shanter’s association with abolition was a construction of the nineteenth century. Art is both a reflection of past communities and an active participant in the shaping of those past communities. Brian Osborne suggests that art is here “for the historian to examine and attain a better understanding of various dimensions of past realities.”⁶⁰ The special ability of art to capture so many different dimensions of the past – events, persons, feelings, values, ideas – positions art as uniquely valuable to archivists and scholars as products of the past, but also as participants in that past.

Documentary art is just another visual record of the past, much like photography. It is compatible with archival principles. Paintings and drawings enhance the documentary record when integrated with other traces of the past already located in archives. The existence of photographic prints of documentary art in the National Archives reflects that

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), xii-xiii.

⁶⁰ Brian S. Osborne, “The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 49.

archives, at one time at least, recognized the documentary potential of art. Archivists must embrace the multimedia nature of archival repositories and think of how we can fully promote that identity to potential users. Archives cannot afford to be static institutions; we must embrace the numerous formats of documentation.

Chapter Three:

Placing the Art Record in the Memory Institution

Having approached the topics of art as documentary and art as archival, in this chapter I endeavor to show how archivists can bring art into their repositories. The chapter begins by discussing reliability of art records and visual literacy. Both are essential to the process of reading art records and successfully merging them with other archival holdings. The chapter then transitions into practical recommendations and examples of how art records can be brought into the memory institution.

Archives must actively pursue ways in which to integrate documentary art with other archival holdings. Yet, it is not enough that archives actively seek out documentary heritage of our communities; we must create a connection between the members of society and that heritage. It is our job as archivists to build bridges between our collections and users. Laura Millar writes that, “A central role of the archival institution ought to be to seek out the records of its society and make those records accessible...”¹ This includes making our users aware of the full scope of archival collections; that archives are much more than paper documents. We collect auditory, textual, and visual materials. But pictorial records present particular challenges to archives, particularly since the archival principles (i.e., provenance

¹ Laura Millar, “Touchstones: Considering the Relationship between Memory and Archives,” *Archivaria* 61 (Spring 2006): 122.

and original order and archival description) were originally designed for textual documents, not sound or pictures or a combination of the two.²

Description of documentary art, in particular, may pose a challenge to archivists and archival theory. Katherine Timms notes that, “Often archival description is based on...contextual research rather than on an examination of the physical records themselves.”³ Archives also, she adds, rarely describe at the item level. However, some nontextual records, such as photographs, require description at the item level. Paintings and drawings may require descriptions which embrace content as well as context. For example, the Archives of American Art, in describing the sketchbooks in the John White Alexander papers, have provided a brief description of the contents of the sketches in the “Detailed Description and Container Inventory” portion of the finding aid.⁴ As archives grow more inclusive, archivists may need to adjust their descriptive practices according to the requirements of the medium. Geoffrey Yeo adds, in the case of boundary objects, that professional descriptive practices

² Hugh Taylor writes, “archival principles, as we know them, were formulated and developed by scholarly bureaucrats from a careful study of textual public records based on the registry and the filing cabinet, and this is reflected in our stewardship over the past century. Non-textual material showed little evidence of a time series and obstinately resisted an original order...” This is not to say that pictorial records are incapable of fitting archival principles of original order and provenance. He writes that, though photographs had in the past been mistreated and “plundered for unusual illustrations,” photograph collections are now recognized as archival. “We now preserve the sanctity of the photographic collection and maintain the photographer’s order based on his records...” Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 419.

³ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 74.

⁴ “Research Collections,” Archives of American Art, accessed July 20, 2011, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/john-white-alexander-papers-8637/more#inventory>.

actually impede access: “if we describe an object in detail to archival standards, the description is rarely reusable in other communities, and retrieval of the object frequently requires the user to know, or to guess, the professional domain to which its description has been assigned.”⁵ Yeo suggests that institutions with boundary objects should use integrated access systems which would accommodate multiple descriptive practices and would include, “bibliographic, curatorial, and recordkeeping metadata in a single environment.”

The challenges linked with boundary objects, however, do not require an abandonment of archival principles. Even Yeo’s suggestion only entails a more inclusive descriptive system, not a reconstruction of archival descriptive practice. In fact, Mary Jo Pugh states that nontextual records in the archive have been made to fit archival principles in practice. She writes, “Most repositories now treat nontextual materials as they treat textual materials, preserving provenance, maintaining original order...describing them in inventories, and indexing them in integrated access tools...” For example, “Photographs are more likely to be described at the item level...but within the context of a finding aid. Audiovisual materials received as part of larger textual collections and record groups are described as part of the whole.”⁶ The challenges posed to archival practice have stretched archival principles but these principles and the practice they guide remain intact. The same will be true for art if it is included in mainstream archival collection practice.

⁵ Geoffrey Yeo, “Concepts of Record (2): Prototypes and Boundary Objects,” *The American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 142.

⁶ Mary Jo Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008), 89.

We face two fundamental problems, in deciding what constitutes documentary art and integrating those materials into our current collections. How do we make visual materials archival? It has already been established that the medium does not determine whether a record is archival or not. The record is archival as long as it is made to agree with certain archival practices. I have chosen to address these broad topics by broaching two narrow questions: 1. How do we determine the reliability of documentary art? 2. How can we accurately read pictures?

As already discussed in chapter two, art is no less honest or documentary than photography, or even textual records. Art seeks to capture some truth about its subject matter, and communicate that truth to the viewer. The problem which many scholars have with art is that the composition may be adjusted so that the overall image may successfully convey that truth to the viewer. In other words, art, even documentary art, is not a mirror image of past events. Furthermore, despite its documentary function, the image is also aesthetic object or art. J. Huizinga writes, "If the painter does nothing but render exactly, by means of line and color, the external aspect of an object, he yet always adds to this purely formal reproduction something inexpressible."⁷ Archivists and researchers must acknowledge that most images, if not all, take certain artistic liberties. War-artist Aaron Bohrod reflects that,

when I state I paint what I see, I mean I consider it necessary to have a given situation take place before my eyes in order that it may later achieve existence as a possible work of art... [But] All this is not to say that in my paintings I do not take certain liberties...For the sake of

⁷ J. Huizinga quote in Hugh A. Taylor, "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist," *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 420.

making a picture work, figures and objects are often rearranged, eliminated, or altered to produce an organic whole and a telling effect.⁸

Hugh Taylor reminds archivists that all records select and omit information,⁹ and thereby adjust the real world to accommodate their intended message or narrative. Aaron Bohrod, in describing his tasks as war-artist, defined the work of all artists as “interpretive seeing.” That is an apt description of the entire contents of archive holdings. All documents are the result of “interpretive seeing.” Hugh Taylor clarifies that artists are incapable of imprinting an exact reflection of their subject onto paper or canvas.¹⁰ He writes, “[the picture] will convey and suggest truthful comment as perceived by the artist as observer, which is as much as we can expect from any observer.”¹¹ The question should not be whether the record is truthful, but if it is reliable. Indeed, many in the archive profession already acknowledge the subjectivity, complexity, and multiplicity of records. Eric Ketelaar writes, “once we no longer assume that there is only one reality or meaning or truth, but many, no one better than the other, we can try to find these multiple meanings by interrogating not only the administrative context, but also the social, cultural, political, religious contexts of record creation, maintenance, and use...”¹² The issue is not art’s subjectivity, but rather its trustworthiness as recorded memory. Can the archivist rely on the painter to convey some

⁸ Aaron Bohrod quoted in *The Army at War: A Graphic Record by American Artists, Paintings and Drawings Lent by the War Department to the United States Treasury Department* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 19.

⁹ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 422.

¹⁰ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 421-422.

¹¹ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” 421.

¹² Eric Ketelaar, “Tacit Narratives: The Meaning of Archives,” *Archival Science* 1 (2001): 141.

truth about his/her time and physical surroundings, or is it a reflection of the artist's self (psychology) and a fantasy world she/he has concocted through paint?

In order to determine the value of historical documents, Brian Osborne writes, the records must be put to the test by the historical method.¹³ The historical method is a rigorous process through which researchers can extract "true facts" from the past.¹⁴ According to G.R. Elton, "historical "facts" are only "knowable" by the evidence they leave behind, evidence which is often enigmatic. It is only after rigorous scrutiny and testing, therefore, that the artistic evidence may be used with confidence as a reliable source of historical fact."¹⁵ In testing historical records, whatever the medium, it is essential to pay particular attention to authenticity, reliability, the intent of the document, the expertise of the documenter, and the overall cultural context of the document's creation.¹⁶ In the determination of the reliability of the record for historical information, archivists, Osborne writes, must afford attention to the artistic style and the medium. However, I would make the argument that reliability is dependent upon a larger spectrum of factors and evidence. This thesis follows Heather MacNeil's definition of reliability: "A reliable record is one that is capable of standing for the facts to which it attests. Reliability thus refers to the truth-value of the record as a

¹³ Brian S. Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 42.

¹⁴ Brian S. Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal," 42.

¹⁵ Brian S. Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal," 42.

¹⁶ Brian S. Osborne, "The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal," 42.

statement of facts...”¹⁷ To determine a record’s effectiveness “as a statement of facts,” the archivist must look to a broader range of elements. Reliability is dependent upon the surface content (artistic style and iconography), contextual data (authorial context, and cultural and historical context), and the validation of authenticity in order for archivists to make a fair assessment of the record. To make an informed decision on the document’s reliability, one must consider authenticity, context, and content information.

One of the most important components in establishing reliability in archival records is one of the more difficult elements to ascertain in image records: authenticity. An authentic record is what it purports to be and has not been manipulated or corrupted between the time of its creation and its arrival in the archive. Heather MacNeil writes that authenticity “refers to truth-value of a record as a physical manifestation of the facts it records and is assessed in relation to a record’s original instantiation.”¹⁸ Rodney G.S. Carter avers that authenticity is established through documentation showing a continuous period of unbroken custody.¹⁹ He cites paper records as essential for the verification of custody: “Documents used to establish the provenance of a work of art include inventories of artists’ studios and of art collections, invoices, correspondence, certificates of authenticity, and auction and exhibition catalogues.”²⁰ However, in many cases determining custody can elude archivists.

¹⁷ Heather MacNeil, “Trusting Records in a Postmodern World,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 39-40.

¹⁸ Heather MacNeil, “Trusting Records in a Postmodern World,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 40.

¹⁹ Rodney G.S. Carter, “Tainted Archives: Art, Archives, and Authenticity,” *Archivaria* 63 (Spring 2007): 77.

²⁰ Rodney G.S. Carter, “Tainted Archives: Art, Archives, and Authenticity,” 77.

Karpenstein, in her study, found that many of the illustrations did not possess a visible link to a specific artist. Major O. Cross's march to Oregon in 1849, for instance, was accompanied by illustrations, but the artist of the images remains unknown.²¹ Karpenstein theorized that George Gibbs, an artist and naturalist that joined the march, was the creator.²² With many of the illustrations of western expeditions, the creator of the images remains a mystery. Documentation, then, is an imperfect solution.

Photography and content-based image retrieval theory²³ hold a few alternative routes for paintings and drawings and the evaluation of reliability. Diane Vogt-O'Connor has written that photographs rely on multiple elements in order to determine authenticity. She writes, "Original photographs...are authentic documents. They are genuine expressions of the photographer's vision and viewpoint..."²⁴ An authentic photograph must contain particular characteristics: 1. It is the original; 2. Linked to the photographer named in the accompanying documentation; 3. Internal information (date, subject material, signature, photographic process, etc.) supports its identification; 4. Original order has been maintained;

²¹ Katherine Karpenstein, *Illustrations of the West in Congressional Documents, 1843-1863* (M.A. Thesis, University of California, 1939), 13-14.

²² Katherine Karpenstein, *Illustrations of the West in Congressional Documents, 1843-1863*, 13-14.

²³ Content-based image retrieval, or CBIR, applies computer visioning techniques in an effort to improve retrieval in digital imagery databases. The name reflects the use of physical content features (color, shape, texture, spatial relation, etc.) to automatically retrieve images. More recently, CBIR professionals have turned their attention to heritage and digital preservation of heritage. One byproduct of this interest is brush-stroke analysis which argues that paintings can be authenticated through analysis of brushstrokes, and that computers can analyze this information to positively identify the artist of a painting.

²⁴ Diane Vogt-O'Connor, "Appraisal and Acquisitions," in *Photographs: Archival Care and Management*, Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2008), 97.

5. No manipulation from an outside source.²⁵ The three significant elements could be summarized as: documentation, original order, and positive link to artist. Documentation and original order are perhaps the simplest methods for ascertaining authenticity of art works.

However, when original order is not maintained and the artist remains unidentified, there is another option open to images. It is possible that computers will play a part in determining authenticity in the future. Scholars, more recently, have discovered ways of using computers to verify the creator of paintings. Researchers Robert Sablatnig, Paul Kammerer and Ernestine Zolda published an article, “The Hierarchical Classification of Painting Using Face – Brushstroke Models” in 1998. The authors discussed how artist brushstrokes are the equivalent of a signature, and how computers could be applied in correctly identifying paintings’ artists. They write, “the “handwriting” of an artist which follows a certain pattern of stroke length and angle, but also the system of lines and the relation of lines to one another” could be input into a computer model designed to identify the artist.²⁶ The researchers tested their model on the miniature paintings of the Austrian royal family. They explain: “the classification model²⁷ and a brush stroke model used to detect brush strokes in intensity images...are integrated into a classification scheme that

²⁵ Diane Vogt-O’Connor, “Appraisal and Acquisitions,” 97.

²⁶ Robert Sablatnig, Paul Kammerer, and Ernestine Zolda, “Hierarchical Classification of Paintings Using Face- and Brush Stroke Models,” in *Proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Pattern Recognition*, Volume 1, *IEEE Computer Society Press* (1998): 172 .

²⁷ The classification model was constructed by merging “artist-specific and artist-independent characteristics...these characteristics are expressed in the way the artist placed the brushstrokes and the constraints he had to work within...” Robert Sablatnig, Paul Kammerer, and Ernestine Zolda, “Hierarchical Classification of Paintings Using Face- and Brush Stroke Models,” 172.

allows the identification of an artist.” One limitation, however, is that the study required knowledge of particular artists and their styles. For example, the researchers explain: “Artist-characteristic features are represented in a set of parameters (like set of colors, eye shape...average stroke length...) of the mathematical model. We use similarity measures of artist-specific parameter sets to compare different artists. The verification of the model within an image results in a measurement, which makes it possible to distinguish paintings of artists.”²⁸ Also, the subject of the study – miniature portraits – is fairly simplistic. Larger, more complicated scenes could prove too difficult for the model.

Another more recent study on more intricate paintings was published in 2007. The Van Gogh and Kröller Müller museums located in the Netherlands put together a “data set of 101 high-resolution gray-scale scans” for image processing researchers to test out their image analysis theories.²⁹ Overall, the study shares in at least one of the limitations of the former study. The model can verify artist identification, but it does not determine the creator of the art piece on its own. However, it is possible that one day such models could be applied to determining authorship. And, as with Karpenstein’s situation, the brush stroke comparison model could be of use to mathematically verify the archivist’s conjecture that a particular artist (like George Gibbs) produced a particular painting. Of course, to be of any use to archives, the model needs to be expanded to verify other types of images (drawings, for

²⁸ Robert Sablatnig, Paul Kammerer, and Ernestine Zolda, “Hierarchical Classification of Paintings Using Face- and Brush Stroke Models,” 173.

²⁹ C. Richard Johnson, Jr. et al. “Image Processing for Artist Identification: Computerized Analysis of Vincent van Gogh’s Painting Brushstrokes,” *IEEE Signal Processing Magazine* vol. 25, no. 4 (July 2008): 37-38.

example). The authenticity of images, though challenging, may be ascertained through multiple avenues: documentation, original order, links to the creator, or computer models.

While authenticity is difficult to ascertain, historical context is perhaps the most helpful element in determining reliability. One method of learning the historical context is through close examination of contemporary textual records. Peter Burke provides a prime example for the usefulness of textual records in determining reliability of visual records. In the eighteenth century, Claud-Joseph Vernet painted the port of La Rochelle, as part of a series of paintings which featured French ports.³⁰ The depiction, however, may confuse historians since the image reflects a scene of busy economic activity and prosperity at a time when, it is known, that the port's trade had subsided.³¹ This confusion is quickly resolved when one reads some of the contemporary textual records connected to the painting. The Marquis de Marigny, the proxy of King Louis XVI, "wrote to Vernet criticizing one of the views, that of the port of Cette, because it had achieved beauty at the expense of "verisimilitude" (*ressemblance*), and reminding the painter that the king's intention was "to see the ports of the kingdom represented in a realistic manner" (*au naturel*)."³² The textual records aid scholars in accurately reading the image as an overly generous depiction of the

³⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 86.

³¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 86.

³² Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 87.

port's economy.³³ When the image is read with the related textual records, one can judge more easily the reliability of the image; and thereby a more accurate reading of the image.

Likewise, historian Vivien Fryd comments in the introduction of her book that she relied heavily upon primary textual records in accurately reading the artwork that adorned the Capitol building in the nineteenth century. She writes, "My interpretation of the stock certificate derives not only from the images themselves but also from the history of nineteenth-century American events and beliefs. Westward expansion, for example, provides the historical basis for understanding why Native Americans are rendered as Vanishing Americans..."³⁴ Images are not fashioned within vacuums, isolated from the influences of particular time periods and cultural values and prejudices. To determine the historical context, scholars must read images conjointly with other traces of the past. Images endeavor to convey a particular message. Textual records provide the necessary context for reading messages and divining the motivations and intentions surrounding those intended messages.

To a lesser degree, style may also impact the reliability of an image. However, judging images by their style can be a very subjective measurement of reliability. Indeed, the authors studied for this thesis all expressed divergent opinions on the subject of the more reliable art styles. Peter Burke suggests that sketches drawn from life and liberated from the

³³ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 86-87.

³⁴ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 3.

“grand style” are more reliable than the art developed in studios.³⁵ Brian Osborne commented that realism was better than impressionism, and that the drawings sketched by draughtsmen and amateurs were more valuable to archives.³⁶ However, art genres may not be so easy to generalize about as some authors would like to pretend. Peter Burke describes some art styles as “apparent realism,” because, though they appear realistic, in reality, they do not reflect a physical reality. He writes, “It has been argued that some paintings of Dutch charlatans represent not scenes from urban life but scenes presented on the stage, featuring stock characters from the *commedia dell’arte*... not a single but a double filter of moralization. We have returned to the problem of “apparent realism”...³⁷ And Peter Burke notes that, even with the artistic styles that endeavor to visually record observations, there are problems with representation. He cautions that documentary art commonly attempted to depict the typical in society, “at the expense of the individual.”³⁸ Archivists should be very careful in placing too much emphasis on artistic styles to determine reliability, which runs the risk of making a subjective judgment rather than an informed one.

However, it would benefit archivists to make themselves familiar with art genres, the same as they are with photographic processes and forms. Each genre or style carries its own

³⁵ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 14-16.

³⁶ Brian S. Osborne, “The Artist as Historical Commentator: Thomas Burrowes and the Rideau Canal,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 42.

³⁷ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 115.

³⁸ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 130-131.

objectives. Peter Burke writes that in seventeenth century Netherlands images of the interiors of residences grew into “a distinct genre with its own conventions. Often taken to be simple celebrations of everyday life, a number of these interiors have been interpreted...as moral allegories in which what was being celebrated was the virtue of cleanliness or that of hard work.”³⁹ During the same century, Dutch culture encouraged an “art of describing” and was among the first to capture scenes featuring towns and the interiors of homes.⁴⁰ When given this contextual information, placing the paintings under the category of Dutch seventeenth century art seems more reliable. Visual genres shape the final image,⁴¹ and our impression of its reliability as a documentary form.

Lastly, understanding who the artist is and his/her background also aids in evaluating reliability. The knowledge that William Mount, the artist who painted *Farmer's Noonning*, was anti-abolitionist should color how one reads his depiction of the abolitionist movement, if not African-Americans.⁴² The fact that George Caleb Bingham served in the Union army and in the provisional government installed by the Union should influence how one reads his *Order No. 11*.⁴³ And nineteenth century artist Louis-Francois LeJeune's practice of sketching

³⁹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 88.

⁴⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 84.

⁴¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 115.

⁴² Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 34.

⁴³ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 202-203.

scenes while on the battlefield, which later became paintings,⁴⁴ should also shape the overall reception of the art and the evaluation of its reliability. The intent of the artist should also be examined. William Mount worked under the direction of a patron, Bingham was responding to his horror in watching Union citizens⁴⁵ displaced from their homes, and Lejeune visually recorded scenes he observed while serving in the army. As with historical and cultural context, artistic style, and authenticity, authorial contextual information should be merged with the other factors to form a fair judgment of the artwork's reliability.

A large part of determining the reliability of art records is knowing how to read them accurately. We must learn how to read visual records in order to determine, firstly, what they communicate and, secondly, the reliability of that information. There are numerous theories on visual literacy. But it can all be grouped beneath two terms: content (subject, iconography, artistic style) and context (artist, intent, and historical context).

Elisabeth Kaplan and Jeffrey Mifflin have written on visual literacy in archives and its growing presence in our society. With the advent of the printing press, various authors

⁴⁴ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 148.

⁴⁵ In response to criticisms, Bingham defended the residents pictured in *Order Number 11* as loyal citizens of the Union. He writes, "The great mass of these residents possessed all those virtues which usually characterize an agricultural people. It was well known that they were strongly attached to the Federal Union..." From his perspective, the government was "waging war of desolation against a large population living in obedience to its laws, and supplying its armies with troops and subsistence." Bingham quote in Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 204-205. Sarah Bohl adds, "This action was taken by the Union army against Union citizens in a Union state. Order Number 11 made no distinction between loyal citizens and Southern supporters..." Sarah Bohl, "A War on Civilians: Order Number 11 and the Evacuation of Western Missouri," *Prologue* 36 (Spring 2004): 49.

have stated that the written word steadily grew in importance and use. However, Kaplan and Mifflin inform archivists that today's records have become increasingly visual. They write, "Most archivists recognize that contemporary culture is increasingly captured by and reflected in visual and audiovisual documents, and that the proliferation of such materials presents new challenges to the archival profession."⁴⁶ In the scores of definitions of visual literacy, Kaplan and Mifflin have found Horton's 1982 definition the most attractive: "that "visual literacy is the ability to understand and use images and to think and learn in terms of images, i.e., to think visually" is probably the most useful definition to date..."⁴⁷ Certainly, the difficulty for archivists lies in the foreign character of visual language. Images formulate a language which is seemingly unlike the more familiar textual language. However, archivists must remember that images were forged in the effort to convey specific ideas to groups of people, and more often than not, artists used imagery recognizable to their audiences. Pope Gregory the Great wrote on the subject of pictures as conveyers of information: "Pictures are placed in Churches so that those who cannot read in books might "read" by viewing the walls."⁴⁸ Hugh Taylor, in fact, made the argument that visual language is not so different from textual language:

We conceptualize and organize our thoughts around categories, stereotypes, and well-established concepts, which act as comfortable

⁴⁶ Elisabeth Kaplan and Jeffrey Mifflin, " "Mind and Sight": Visual Literacy and the Archivist," *Archival Issues* 21, no. 2 (1996): 107.

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Kaplan and Jeffrey Mifflin, " "Mind and Sight": Visual Literacy and the Archivist," 111.

⁴⁸ Pope Gregory quote in Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 48.

pigeon holes for the initial rough sort of our ideas. This is much the same process as form-filling, and we use the term, *form*, in art to denote the deployment of the various elements in a picture. Similarly, the term *form* is used with legal records in such phrases as “common form,” which are in fact groups of legal *schema*...Likewise...The study of diplomatics is the study of forms as a clue to the nature, purpose, and date of early documents.⁴⁹

The difficulty lies in the fact that these popular images were created in a particular locale and a particular time period and the visual language reflects both; just because the images were familiar and readable by past communities does not mean that modern viewers can easily read the images. Robert Levine clarifies that the interpretation of images is a learned skill. He writes, “Photographs, then, are not messages with precise meaning; rather, they provide the raw material for many messages which viewers “see”. And since viewers “see” through the lens of personal cultural values and social expectations, “seeing” and “interpreting” photographs is learned. “Truth,” then, varies from eye to eye.”⁵⁰ The viewer’s contextual knowledge helps to give the image meaning – without that we cannot hope to truly understand past images.⁵¹ For example, from examining the genre art of William Sidney Mount, we know that paintings of seemingly sweet scenes of rural life hold, in fact, deeper messages on the social and economic life in nineteenth century America. In order to read images, we must read the context along with the content of images.

⁴⁹ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 424.

⁵⁰ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Princeton Hall, 2004), 17.

⁵¹ Robert M. Levine, *Insights into American History: Photographs as Documents*, 124-125.

Indeed contextual information is essential to the accurate reading of familiar symbols and iconography that relay complex ideas (surface content of images). The appearance of particular symbols was shaped according to time period and culture. In nineteenth century America, for instance, Justice was commonly visualized by a blindfolded woman holding scales, the U.S. Constitution, and/or a sword.⁵² Centuries before, in medieval Europe, Justice was pictured with the canon book of law instead of the U.S. Constitution.⁵³ In a genre painting *Firecracker*, David Gilmour Blythe used objects that were typically associated with the theme of anarchy and urban reform. He pictured a youth holding a firecracker, an object typically identified in nineteenth century Pittsburgh with arson, violence and riots.⁵⁴ Through that simple image he conveyed his personal belief of urban reform's failure in 1856 Pittsburgh.⁵⁵ Colors, according to Barbara Craig and James O'Toole, imbued the subject of a portrait with particular qualities and connected them to different segments of public life (law for instance). They explain, "By the eighteenth century well-developed written cultures had taken root in law, business, and private communication. Each one favored different colors for paper and used distinct document types and formats – indentures, ledgers, and letters being

⁵² Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 177-179.

⁵³ Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: the Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860*, 179.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 193.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, 193.

the most obvious.”⁵⁶ If records were shown in the portrait of a lawyer, then the colors of the record would be enough to link the man to that profession without the use of written words. This was a reflection of how intertwined text had become in the day-to-day lives of eighteenth-century American society. Many of the sketches and paintings were designed to be read, and with the correct context, modern viewers can read them as well.

Indeed, artists integrated and modified a learned schema into their artwork, just as writers fit their words into accepted literary schemas. Hugh Taylor reflects that artists apply “figures of paint,” similar to “figures of speech” in textual records, to depict their chosen subject material.⁵⁷ Peter Burke writes that most paintings rely on stock figures, stock scenes, and formulae to convey a particular narrative. He writes, “However, it is only reasonable to recognize that most if not all narratives rely on formulae of some kind, even stories which try to disrupt the expectations of their readers.”⁵⁸ Stock figures and other formulae were integrated into art pieces in order to guide the audience’s reading of the image. In his painting *Boatmen on the Missouri*, George Bingham imposed the poses of “Raphael’s seated river god in the *Judgment of Paris*...and...Michelangelo’s digging Noah in the Sistine

⁵⁶ Barbara L. Craig and James M. O’Toole, “Looking at Archives in Art,” *The American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000), 110.

⁵⁷ Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 423.

⁵⁸ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 144.

Ceiling...” onto the figures in his painting.⁵⁹ Nancy Rash explains that this enabled Bingham to link the identity of the boatmen to that of past art-historical figures. She writes, “he likened his Missouri boatmen to the river gods of classical antiquity or to Noah...In associating his hardy boatmen with river gods and patriarchs, Bingham dignified them and suggested...their links with other civilizations.”⁶⁰ Bingham sought to illustrate the essentiality of the boatmen to the running of steamboats, and the economy of Missouri.⁶¹ By linking them to past leaders of civilization, he endeavored to communicate their economic importance.

Peter Burke labels this practice of interjecting elements of earlier paintings into later ones as quoting images. He notes that, in some instances, an image might quote, “another image, the visual equivalent of intertextuality. David Wilkie’s *Penny Wedding* (1818), for example, which is full of details of material culture, is doubtless based to some extent on the observation of his native Fife, but it also borrows from or alludes to seventeenth-century Dutch paintings or prints...”⁶² Nancy Rash adds that George Bingham quoted “figures with charged meanings. Most important for the message of his work, he added references to images that had chronicled the bloody prologue to Order No. 11, most notably illustrations of

⁵⁹ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 82.

⁶⁰ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham*, 82.

⁶¹ Rash writes that the painting pictures three boatmen taking wood to sell to the steamboats. Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham*, 81-82.

⁶² Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 97.

the Lawrence Massacre.”⁶³ Art historian E. Maurice Bloch links the iconography in Bingham’s *Order No. 11* to the iconography of former paintings: “between Massaccio’s *Expulsion*...and the blacks on the right; between Fra Bartolommeo’s...*Pietà* and the four figures at the feet of the father; between Greuze’s *The Father’s Curse* and the central group of father and clinging children; and between the *Apollo Belvedere* and the father.”⁶⁴ By quoting other art pieces, Bingham attached the iconography to particular feelings and events invoked in scenes featured in earlier art pieces. This iconography would have been familiar to his nineteenth century audience. Artists used stock figures and scenes in the same way that the symbols of Justice and slavery were applied in nineteenth century American art in the Capitol building. Artists used familiar symbols and imagery to speak to their audience.

In reading these past images, there are a number of schools of thought on how to accurately interpret imagery. Peter Burke particularly notes the theories of the iconographers, structuralists, and post-structuralists. The iconographers believe that one can read images through a close analysis of the details within art. They read artwork by placing related texts and images beside the intended art work, and highlight the importance of knowing the cultural codes which shaped each art piece.⁶⁵ The problem with this approach is that it has a tendency towards subjectivity, and to ignore how the images were received and interpreted

⁶³ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 196.

⁶⁴ Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham*, 196.

⁶⁵ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 34-39.

by the artist's contemporaries. Peter Burke concludes that one needs iconography but "also needs to go beyond it."⁶⁶ While iconographers study the deliberate development of meaning, the structuralists focus on the unconscious construction of meaning. Structuralists believed that images were a "system of signs," and focused their attention on how those signs interacted. They insisted that the meaning of the image lay in the structure of the image; in its themes and stock figures.⁶⁷ The issue many took with structuralist theory was its insistence that there was one message and its inability to leave any room for ambiguity. Post-Structuralists, as the name suggests, reacted to structuralist theory. They argued that there are a myriad of meanings to be taken from images. The weakness of post-structuralists was their belief that no one meaning was more truthful or valid than another.⁶⁸

Peter Burke concludes that art lies somewhere between two extremes: a reflection of a social reality, and a system of signs separate from the outside world. He writes, "that in the case of images – as in that of texts – the conventions filter information about the outside world but do not exclude it. It is only rarely, as in the case of the "monstrous races"...that stereotypes are so crude as to exclude information altogether."⁶⁹ For example, if a nineteenth century historian or explorer were to portray an alien culture, the portrait of that culture would contain information about the alien culture but also about the artist and his/her cultural

⁶⁶ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 40-42.

⁶⁷ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 172-174.

⁶⁸ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 175-177. The above paragraph on post-structuralism summarizes Peter Burke's ideas.

⁶⁹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 183-184.

origins.⁷⁰ Burke summarizes, “Images give access not to the social world directly but rather to contemporary views of that world, the male view of women, the middle-class view of peasants, the civilian view of war, and so on.” For that reason, he recommends that images be placed within a group of contexts: cultural, social (how the image was received by the artist’s contemporaries), political, material, and artistic (the intended purpose of the image).⁷¹ He also suggests stereotyping the artist’s gaze: “it is useful to think in terms of the western gaze, for example, the scientific gaze, the colonial gaze, the tourist gaze or the male gaze...The gaze often expresses attitudes of which the viewer may not be conscious...”⁷² By thinking in terms of particular gazes, it enables the reader to see the details of the painting or drawing commonly unseen; the absence of certain figures or elements, or the unconscious recording of details overlooked by the artist.⁷³ By looking at the details or iconography alongside the series of contexts, archivists and scholars can more accurately derive the intended message of the painting.

One avenue for enhancing our contextual knowledge of images is through subject research. Jeffrey Mifflin writes that, “Cultivating subject-specific understanding as well as general historical awareness expands our competency to read photographs and promotes

⁷⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 184.

⁷¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 187.

⁷² Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 125.

⁷³ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 188.

more contextualized and historically grounded use of information.”⁷⁴ The problem with using images as historical evidence, argues Mifflin, is its propensity for becoming disconnected from a particular time and place. Context roots images temporally and geographically.⁷⁵ By ensuring this connection, the archivist limits the multiplicity of meaning “inherent in images.”⁷⁶ Joan Schwartz posits that it is the responsibility of the archivist to collect the contextual information of an image and then convey that information to researchers. She writes, “Our job is to seek their intended function or role – be it personal, social, political, or economic – as a means of communicating a message across time and/or space and then to consider how to preserve and describe them in a way that respects, reveals, and retains their impact on human relations, power, and knowledge.”⁷⁷ Jeffrey Mifflin adds that Jim Burant supports this position. Burant opines that archivists must act as guides for researchers by relaying, “accurate contextual information...to position them [the images] better...”⁷⁸ The archivist only achieves this by forming descriptions and other access tools that display both content information (the surface structure of an image) and contextual research (authorial, historical, social, economic, political, etc.)⁷⁹ Context is not only necessary for accurately

⁷⁴ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 32.

⁷⁵ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 35.

⁷⁶ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 61.

⁷⁷ Schwartz quote in Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 36.

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 61.

⁷⁹ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” 36.

reading images, then, it is also the vehicle by which archivists provide access and unlock the historical data held in images.

In 1939, Erwin Panofsky summarized the Hamburg group's (a well-known group of iconographers in the early to mid-twentieth century) approach to visual literacy. His model reflects many of the ideas espoused by Schwartz and Mifflin, and archivists may find it a useful starting place for image interpretation. He theorized that there are three levels of interpretation to visual literacy.⁸⁰ The first level involved the simple identification of the objects in an image; identifying the image's surface structure. At this level, the reader should identify that the image contains houses or a battle. In the second level, the viewer must identify the "conventional meaning" or conscious meaning of an image.⁸¹ The reader, then, should identify that the battle shown is the Battle of Waterloo. This level involves using known contextual information to read the scene in the image. To identify particular battles or persons or places, the reader must be aware of the culture which shaped the image. What did the artist intend to convey? In the last level, the viewer must find the "intrinsic meaning" or unconscious reporting in an image. What values and/or basic feelings of a particular nation/religion/class/time period does the image reflect?⁸² Panofsky's model for visual literacy forces the viewer to examine the content and the context (conscious and unconscious reporting). If utilized by archivists, however, the model will need to be expanded to include

⁸⁰ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 35.

⁸¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 35-36.

⁸² Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 36.

authorial contextual information (author's intent) and social context (general reception of the art piece by the artist's contemporaries). Archivists should also add study of artistic style to the first level. Otherwise, this is a good, workable model for visual literacy.

Although the ability to read iconography is essential to visual literacy, sometimes artists attach text in and around the image to guide the interpretation of their image. Eighteenth century artist, William Hogarth offers an excellent example of the merging of text and image in his painting, *The Marriage Settlement*. In the painting, he inscribed on the paper in the hands of the girl's father "Marriage Settlement of the Rt Honourable Lord Viscount Squanderfield," to designate the scene as a satire and communicate that fact to his audience.⁸³ Peter Burke explains that, due to the difficulty of condensing a "dynamic sequence" into a "static scene," artists on occasion integrated text into their art. He writes, "anticipating difficulties such as these, the painter provides explanations in the form of inscriptions, legends or "subtitles"...making the image into what the art historian Peter Wagner calls an "iconotext"."⁸⁴ The importance of captions to the interpretation of images is readily acknowledged by archivists and others involved in the processing of visual records. Elizabeth Edwards, for example, has "observed that the meaning of photographs can be "suggested or guided" by accompanying written material that "further enmeshes them in a particular context." Words can be "used to position the photographs and processes of interpretation are

⁸³ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 144.

⁸⁴ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, 143-144.

controlled through the interaction of image and text”.”⁸⁵ Certainly, the addition of the text on the back of Eastman Johnson’s *Ride for Liberty*, previously mentioned in chapter one, imbued the painting with greater authority as historical evidence. Though many of the paintings and drawings already mentioned can be read visually, it cannot be denied that text serves to reinforce our interpretations, at the very least.

Of course, the challenges to housing art in archives do not end with mechanics of visual interpretation. Despite Hugh Taylor’s suggestion that a finished painting may represent a fond⁸⁶, archivists must determine how to preserve the original order of artwork. And beyond the logistics of processing art, archivists must defend their image in the cultural heritage community against the impression of professional imperialism. The best method for achieving that goal is for archives to work *with* other heritage institutions, rather than in competition with them. The Archives of American Art serves as *one* model for how to handle such impediments. However, the Archives does not present a perfect model; only a useful one. In 1967, Garnett McCoy wrote an article about the Archives, and acknowledged, “In a technical sense...it is a repository of primary documentation acquired from a variety of sources rather than a true archives.”⁸⁷ The primary purpose of the Archives was to bring art primary sources – both visual and textual – into one central location. Since the publication of

⁸⁵ Jeffrey Mifflin, “Visual Archives in Perspective: Enlarging on Historical Medical Photographs,” *The American Archivist* 70 (Spring/ Summer 2007): 60.

⁸⁶ He argues that finished paintings are the accumulation of previous art pieces. So, then, a finished painting could represent a fond. Hugh A. Taylor, “Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist,” *The American Archivist* 42 (Oct 1979): 423.

⁸⁷ Garnett McCoy, “The Archives of American Art,” *The American Archivist* 30 (July 1967): 443.

the article, the Archives has joined with the Smithsonian and has digitized whole collections, and microfilmed many others. It provides users with multiple access tools: on-line finding aids, digitized whole collections, an image gallery containing digitized images and textual records, an on-line catalogue for the Archives and other Smithsonian repositories, a search engine for the Archives' holdings, and microfilmed collections which are accessible through interlibrary loan. According to the website's home page, the repository houses over "Sixteen million letters, diaries and scrapbooks of artists, dealers, and collectors; manuscripts of critics and scholars; business and financial records of museums, galleries, schools, and associations; photographs of art world figures and events; sketches and sketchbooks..." as well as film, audio and audio-visual recordings, and a large collection of oral histories.⁸⁸ One example of a collection is the Ray Strong Papers, 1925-1943. It consists of, "Three scrapbooks of clippings, 1925-1969; exhibition catalogs, 1946-1992; photographs of landscapes, landscape paintings, and Strong at work; and a sketchbook entitled "Ray Strong and Eric Panfitt's Ideas Book"; and miscellaneous printed materials."⁸⁹ Photographs of paintings, sketchbooks, financial records, audio and audio-visual recordings, textual records, and oral histories are all brought together into one repository. The Archives then integrates various media into a cohesive whole. For this reason alone, the Archives of American Art is an excellent model for other archives looking to integrate visual records with their other media.

⁸⁸ "About Us," Archives of American Art, accessed May 1, 2011, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/aboutus>.

⁸⁹ "Research Collections," Archives of American Art, accessed May 1, 2011, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/ray-strong-papers-6399>.

From its beginning, microfilm played an important role in the preservation and access to art records. Microfilming is a simple solution to accusations of professional imperialism and improves access. Garnett McCoy wrote, “Initially it [microfilming] was regarded only as a means of collecting historical records maintained in other institutions. This conception was abandoned as collections of original papers began to be offered...In addition to maintaining and preserving them in the usual fashion, however, these donated collections were microfilmed.” McCoy lists four reasons for microfilming: firstly, it allowed the repository to pursue “a more intensive cataloguing effort”; secondly, the microfilmed collections could easily be sent to researchers unable to physically visit the repository; thirdly, it enhanced the longevity of overused originals; and lastly, the microfilmed collections (the copies) were easy and inexpensive to replace.⁹⁰ Through microfilming, the Archives was able to keep copies of the original records in the repositories, while private collectors or galleries kept the originals. Another benefit of microfilming, unremarked by McCoy, may be the ability to maintain the original order of a collection, the contents of which may range greatly in size and preservation requirements (for example small sketches versus oversized oil paintings).

As mentioned before, the website for the Archives of American Art permits easy access to the collections through digitization of whole collections, a search engine, finding aids, short summaries of collections, and a cross-institutional catalogue (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Manuscripts, and Photographs Catalog). This option of physical access through microfilming and digitization reflects the profession’s movement towards and into

⁹⁰ Garnett McCoy, “The Archives of American Art,” *The American Archivist* 30 (July 1967): 444.

the digital realm. Kit Peterson has made note of the shift in the archival profession towards increased digitization. She writes, “Digital conversion work has become part of the mainstream of archival activity.”⁹¹ Paul Conway’s study suggests digitization is archival, as long as the original order is reflected in the digital surrogates. He writes, “This sequence of thumbnail images represents the full power of the photographic archive. The archival nature is preserved and transmitted through the tools for displaying contextually related items.”⁹² The Archives of American Art manages just that in its fully digitized collections. The Florence Knoll Bassett papers have been fully digitized, for example. When clicking on the collection, the user finds him/ herself at the on-line finding aid for the collection. In the finding aid, there are links to the six series that comprise the collection. Once the series is clicked on, the user is taken to the container inventory portion of the finding aid which shows what is held in each box and folder. Then if the user clicks on Bassett’s portfolio of sketches and drawings, located in box 1 folder 3, for instance, the digital contents (the sketches and drawings) of the folder reflect the order of the physical folder located in the vault of the Archives. Certainly, not all of the collections are digitally available or microfilmed. However, the digitally accessible collections allow users to access the materials on-line in an archival context.

⁹¹ Kit A. Peterson, “Digitizing Photographs” in *Photographs: Archival Care and Management*, Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O’Connor (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2008), 405.

⁹² Paul Conway, “Modes of Seeing: Digitized Photographic Archives and the Experienced User,” *The American Archivist* 73 (Fall/Winter 2010): 457.

An alternative avenue open to archivists is collaborative projects or a collaborative relationship between museums and archives. John Fleckner tells of a former collaborative project in which he was involved: “An archival colleague and I joined with museum specialists...to select records and artifacts from a defunct manufacturer of ivory products and piano key actions...Our collaboration assured that archival documentation of the artifacts they selected would be as complete as possible.”⁹³ Projects, such as this one, would aid archives in avoiding accusations of professional imperialism. This would also permit archives to focus their attention on documentation (textual context) of art, and surrender actual preservation and presentation of art to museums.

Developing a collaborative relationship with museums similar to the arrangement in Canada between Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the National Gallery is another option. By doing so, archivists would not be breaking out of the traditional role for archives, or the traditional relationship between archives and museums. Kenneth Foote suggests that the activities of both institutions exist within a larger mission to collect and preserve collective memory. He notes, “the activities of, say, archives and museums are interwoven. Each particular institution may sustain a *representation* of the past quite specific to its institutional mandate, but these representations can be interrelated.”⁹⁴ The relationship between LAC and the National Gallery in Canada reflects Foote’s depiction of the place of archives and museums in the heritage community and their complicated relationship to each

⁹³ John Fleckner, “Archives and Museums,” *The Midwestern Archivist* 15, no 2 (1990): 71.

⁹⁴ Kenneth E. Foote, “To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture,” 380.

other. The two institutions work together to preserve Canada's heritage, though they both, at times, collect the same materials. This is demonstrated through the regular loans and transfers which are exchanged in both directions.⁹⁵ Both preserve art works as part of Canada's heritage, but preserve them for separate purposes.

Moreover, museums and archives are growing more interconnected, as the activities of museums now encompass collection of documentation as well as objects. Indeed, Kathleen Williams notes, "museums *are* changing...Museums increasingly are focused on educational objectives and audience development...Museums have not stopped collecting objects – far from it – but many no longer view collecting and preserving objects as their main purpose, their *raison d'être*."⁹⁶ The reality is that the activities of museums are changing – in their collection practices and in their objectives – and archives could help museums in preserving documentary records and benefit from access to documentary art. Working together, the two institutions could preserve documentary art and communicate the historical quality of art to researchers.

As already remarked on by Kenneth Foote, archives are preservers of collective memory in two fundamental ways. In the first, archives preserve the collective thinking of past societies through housing documents of the past. Secondly, they work collectively with

⁹⁵ Greg Spurgeon, "Pictures and History: The Art Museum and the Visual Arts Archives," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-4): 66-67.

⁹⁶ Deborah Wythe, "The Museum Context," in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 11.

other memory institutions, such as museums, to preserve the heritage of our societies.⁹⁷ In agreement with the latter definition, Hugh Taylor has argued that collective memory requires collaboration between libraries, museums, and archaeological finds as well as archives. He writes: “The failure to relate documentary material culture to other forms of evidence of social activity and function has caused archivists to give undue significance to the concept of “collective memory” residing in the archives.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, he notes that the distinction between archives and museums present in theory is not always the reality in practice. Increasingly, “Historic sites often have both archival and museum materials, photographs are to be found everywhere, and the British Museum curates everything. Museums are quick to recognize the iconic nature of many of our holdings, as is evident in joint exhibitions.”⁹⁹ The reality is that there are already mergings of archives and museums, alterations to the traditional roles and activities of museums, and both institutions would benefit from collaborative projects. Elizabeth Wood probably exemplifies this best with her study of archives and their importance to the study of cultural history. She writes that archivists are needed to provide contextual documentation for historical objects and buildings. She laments, “records [of value to cultural historians] are being allowed to moulder into dust...How can we expect to accurately furnish historical houses or meaningfully presented

⁹⁷ Kenneth E. Foote, “To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture,” *The American Archivist* 53 (Summer 1990): 380.

⁹⁸ Hugh Taylor, ““Heritage” Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995): 11.

⁹⁹ Hugh Taylor, ““Heritage” Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” 15.

museum exhibits if the documents needed are allowed to disintegrate?”¹⁰⁰ The point is that archives do not have to exceed their budgets to include art in their holdings, or step far outside of the conventional concept of archive holdings (textual records), to broaden the scope of those holdings. Archives can accommodate the historical quality of art without compromising archival principles or conventional archival identity. But we must be proactive in seeking out all documentary media whatever course we choose.

As commented on previously, archives and museums are moving towards a closer relationship due to the shift in museum collection policies. Reflecting this movement, SAA has recognized museum archivists as a professional group with its own “common voice and vision.”¹⁰¹ Around this same time, museums began to shift their attention from research to teaching, and began discussions on documentation in the museum.¹⁰² Ann Marie Przybyla writes, in a 1989 “report on collecting issued by the American Association for State and Local History, sound records were listed as a “new category” for history museums to pursue along with “flat material: visual and/or written.”¹⁰³ Parallel to this shift in the museum profession is the professionalization of the museum archivist. The real start of this development can be traced to 1979 when, “twenty-two archivists and librarians from

¹⁰⁰Elizabeth B. Wood, “Pots and Pans History: Relating Manuscripts and Printed Sources to the Study of Domestic Art Objects,” *The American Archivist* 30 (July 1967): 441.

¹⁰¹ Ann Marie Przybyla, “The Museum Archives Movement,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 5.

¹⁰² John Fleckner, “Archives and Museums,” *The Midwestern Archivist* 15, no 2 (1990): 70-72.

¹⁰³ Ann Marie Przybyla, “The Museum Archives Movement,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 1.

eighteen repositories” came together in Elkridge, Maryland at the Belmont Conference Center to discuss the growth of archive programs in museums.¹⁰⁴ Several years later in 1986, SAA established a roundtable for museum archivists and in 1990 this forum became a professional group within SAA.

More than likely, the parallel development of the museum archivist’s professionalization and the museum’s growing awareness of the value of documentation was not a coincidence. Ann Marie Przybyla writes, beginning in the 1980s, “archivists and researchers began chronicling the benefits that these new museum archives were providing their parent institutions.”¹⁰⁵ More than simply providing the museum curators with necessary research material,

museum archivists were providing support to all segments of the institutional population, utilizing records for previously undiscovered purposes. They assisted development officers who were researching past donor relations, educators developing class materials for local schoolchildren, architects and contractors analyzing the construction and evolution of the physical plant, and much more. When scholars and other members of the public gained access to museum records, they found a surprisingly rich resource for understanding broader questions of social and cultural history, or the forces that “shape the cultural content of society.”

John Fleckner explains these changes by emphasizing the reorientation of the museum profession from research to teaching, and its interest in textual records as purveyors of social

¹⁰⁴ Ann Marie Przybyla, “The Museum Archives Movement,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ Ann Marie Przybyla, “The Museum Archives Movement,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 5-6.

and historical context. He explains, “The odds and ends of memorabilia that a veteran has carried about for nearly half a century have meaning only as they are linked to that individual and to his or her story.”¹⁰⁶ So now we find that museum activities have overstepped the boundary between museum and archival activities, and the distinction between the two, based on material holdings, has become blurred.¹⁰⁷ Indeed Przybyla notes the challenge in distinguishing museum materials and archive materials: “because of the difficulty of distinguishing between “documentary evidence,” “artifact,” and “object” – or fixing the line between archival and museum collections – institutional archives often contain commemorative plaques, buttons, pennants, ornamental seals, trophies, sculpted busts, and any other number of three-dimensional objects.”¹⁰⁸ All of these alterations to the museum profession coalesce to offer the museum archivist, if not archivists in general, an ideal opportunity. Anthony Reed writes: “Museum archivists are in a special position to broker the relationship between object and textual resource; it’s a rare opportunity and one we should look forward to.”¹⁰⁹ The topic of documentary art could be an excellent experiment for longer and more involved collaborative projects between museums and archives, and an opportunity

¹⁰⁶ John A. Fleckner, “Archives and Museums,” *The Midwestern Archivist* 15, no 2 (1990): 69-70.

¹⁰⁷ John A. Fleckner, “Archives and Museums,” 70.

¹⁰⁸ Ann Marie Przybyla, “The Museum Archives Movement,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 1.

¹⁰⁹ Reed discusses how museums archivists may determine where an object belongs: in the exhibit or in the archive. He highlights the influence of institutional mandates in shaping museum archives, but also the importance of collaboration in deciding the placement of boundary objects. Anthony Reed, “Objects in the Archives,” in *Museum Archives: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., ed. Deborah Wythe (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, Museum Archives Section, 2004), 176.

particularly for museum archivists to “broker the relationship between object and textual resource.”

Another manifestation of this shift in museum activities (and an alternative course of action for archives) is integrated access systems. Katherine Timms has studied the commonalities between libraries, museums, and archives, and how these professions could develop a unified system. She justifies this action by highlighting the common roles and activities of all three. She comments that all three participate in, “collecting new materials...; organizing and arranging collections (i.e., archival arrangement and description, or cataloguing and classification of books and artifacts); providing access...; and preserving and conserving collections.”¹¹⁰ The difficulty lies in the fact that, though all three are situated within the same “cultural heritage family,” they each utilize different description paradigms. And yet, at the same time, the boundaries between the professions have proven flexible in recent years, and there are many incidents of hybrid cultural institutions; archives in museums for example.¹¹¹

The next step, according to Katherine Timms, is the development of integrated on-line access systems that merge all three at the digital level. The digital realm could act as a

¹¹⁰ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 72.

¹¹¹ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” 70-75.

meeting place for archives, libraries, and museums.¹¹² One way to accomplish this is through the linking of different description standards (i.e. metadata schemes) to each other; in other words a metadata crosswalk. A metadata crosswalk is a pathway that is used to unite divergent metadata standards to form hybrid or integrated access systems. In the past, it has been used in linking Dublin Core to USMARC and USMARC to EAD.¹¹³ Three other methods of accomplishing this are through federated searching (using one portal to search multiple databases), metadata aggregation systems (divergent metadata are brought together into one digital repository), or “systems in which a common schema has been used to create new collection-level descriptions.”¹¹⁴ KnowledgeOntario is an example of a metadata aggregation system. Timms explains,

OurOntario.ca, one of its programs, consists of an integrated search portal that provides access to the digital content (descriptions and/or digitized objects) produced by Ontario’s various cultural heritage institutions including libraries, archives, museums, and historical societies. It uses bots to harvest records from other databases and store them in a central repository...It is also important to point out that OurOntario.ca integrates access to both descriptive records from a variety of types of repositories as well as digitized items accompanied by descriptions.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” 68.

¹¹³ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” 80.

¹¹⁴ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” 79 & 82-83.

¹¹⁵ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” 84.

The last option – development of new collection level descriptions - involves the creation of a common descriptive schema at the collection level, such as the Research Libraries Support Program Collection-Level Description schema or RLSP CLD.¹¹⁶ As we move more and more towards a digital world, archivists may find that cooperative digital projects are the future for cultural heritage institutions.

The point is that archivists can integrate documentary art into their holdings without compromising their long-standing principles and activities. There are a range of options open to them, anywhere from the older medium of microfilm to the new digital realm. It is essential that archives acknowledge the documentary importance of art to the historical record, and look for ways of expanding their holdings to include this old medium of recording.

¹¹⁶ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” 87.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that art is recorded memory and representative of past societies and events. Paintings and sketches have been utilized as recording technologies by leaders, explorers, military officers, and artists. These visual statements stand as both a product of and participant in these past communities. By looking at the definition of archival records, examining particular art records, and discussing reliability in art and other media, this thesis has sought to demonstrate the documentary and archival characteristics of paintings and drawings.

On the subject of art and enduring memory, George Bingham wrote: “Much that is of great importance in the history of the world would be lost if it were not for Art...Great empires which have arisen, flourished and disappeared, are now chiefly known by their imperishable records of Art.”¹ In an 1871 letter to friend James Rollins, Bingham stated that between his artwork and William Mount’s, he felt secure “that our social and political characteristics as daily and annually exhibited will not be lost in the lapse of time for want of an Art record...” Though art can never be a window into the past or a perfect mirror image of past events, it does represent first-hand observations. Geoffrey Yeo has defined archival records as enduring representations set down by participants or first-hand observers. The paintings and drawings produced by George Caleb Bingham, William Mount, Seth Eastman,

¹ Bingham quote in Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 218. Same citation for following quote as well.

Charles E. Ruttan, and others mentioned, perfectly embody this definition of archival records. Bingham witnessed the impact of the Civil War upon Missouri, Mount participated in the ideological debates of the time through his artwork, Eastman travelled the West and visually documented the environment and people he encountered, and Ruttan accurately painted the Navy in accordance with (Assistant Secretary of the Navy) Franklin Roosevelt's instructions.

Postmodernism has altered our relationship with the past. Responding to the postmodernist belief in multiple truths and narratives, scholars have sought out new stories in unconventional places. Biologists, historic preservationists, and historians of numerous sub-fields have found art records invaluable to their research. These art records have captured aspects of the past largely unrecorded in textual documents. Randall Jimerson has emphasized the importance of diversity in archives. However, he states, archives are restrained as institutions of exclusion: "Archives serve to exclude some documentation and to legitimate others. The challenge is to make such choices openly, deliberately, and mindfully – listening for the marginalized voices, opening the door to the stranger whose concerns enable us to understand the diversity of society."² Certainly archives do deny access to many records but documentary art should not be one of those records. If the documentary qualities of art are not preserved large portions of our past will be lost to us and future generations. Paintings and drawings have captured details absent from the textual record.

² Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009) 309.

These are recorded memories. If our goal is diversity, we should embrace that diversity, not only in the content of our records, but also in their formats.

Furthermore, documents and memories are the central business of archives. For this reason, archivists have a responsibility to seek out ways in which to bring documentary art into their repositories and establish a link between these holdings and researchers. It has been shown that archives are moving away from the traditional imagery of neutrality, impartiality, and passivity. Many now embrace the multiple narratives captured in archival records, and accept their role in creating new meanings and contexts. Archives now hold a variety of formats (digital, auditory, visual as well as textual). By bringing art into archives, archivists will re-fashion paintings and drawings as documentary as well as aesthetic. Tom Nesmith states, “when a record is designated archival, it is assigned a special status. It is circled, framed, or privileged for a particular type of viewing... This mediates reality not only by affecting what we *can* know about the past, but also by saying that this is what we *need* to know about it.”³ As much as researchers value and require these pictorial records, paintings and drawings require the attention of archives and archivists in the initiation of a reframing of art as documentary records and the commencement of an alternative “type of viewing.”

If American archives were to accept documentary art into mainstream collection practice, this would allow archives to expand and strengthen the documentary record. Certainly, documentary art represents several challenges to traditional archival practice, but

³ Tom Nesmith, “Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives,” *The American Archivist* 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 32.

no more so than the other nontextual records occupying archival repositories. Archival principles have already been stretched and challenged by, for example, audio-visual records. However, Mary Jo Pugh assures that, “Audiovisual materials received as part of larger textual collections and record groups are described as part of the whole.”⁴ Like photographs, documentary art may need to be described at the item level, and may require physical separation for preservation reasons. But the original order can be maintained intellectually and the item level description can be limited to the finding aid. Mary Ellings and Günter Waibel have posited that description practices should be developed for particular mediums rather than repositories.⁵ However, the history of archival practice shows that archival principles do fit a variety of media, textual and nontextual. The real challenge to archival theory is my definition of a record. By accepting another documentary medium into mainstream archival collection practice, the archive profession will broaden their concept of the archival record. The archival record, I have argued, can no longer be defined by its physical format, or be limited to one function or one professional domain. Geoffrey Yeo acknowledges, “all elementary records are boundary objects in some sense; all belong to other categories, such as “digital bitstreams,” “objects on paper,” or “written texts,” as well as the category of “records”...the world of records is diverse and multifaceted.”⁶ This is the

⁴ Mary Jo Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008), 89.

⁵ Katherine Timms, “New Partnerships for Old Sibling Rivals: The Development of Integrated Access Systems for the Holdings of Archives, Libraries, and Museums,” *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009): 92.

⁶ Geoffrey Yeo, “Concepts of Record (2): Prototypes and Boundary Objects,” *The American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 143.

most radical element of this thesis; it's challenge to the archive profession to expand and broaden its understanding of the archival record.

Anticipating that budget and preservation concerns are some of the greater obstacles to art in archives, I have suggested several solutions. This thesis has shown that archivists have many options open to them: photographic prints, microfilm, or collaborative projects (in the physical and digital realms). The National Archives and Records Administration holds photographic prints of many paintings and drawings deemed documentary. The application of microfilm by the Archives of American Art has heightened access to their collection and allowed the Archives to bring geographically far-flung artwork into one central location. Collaborative projects between museums and archives represent another avenue for introducing art into the archive, and the improvement of communication between the two. Integrated access systems offer archives the opportunity to merge their collections with those of other memory institutions.

This thesis has brought together research from the fields of history, art history, archives, and content-based image retrieval. It has covered the topics of documentary art's definition, the research uses of documentary art, establishing original order in image collection, authenticity, the definition of an archival record, visual literacy, integrated access systems, inter-institutional collaboration, and digitization of collections. However, this thesis has only touched on these topics. As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this paper was to prove that paintings and sketches are documentation, and to show how archivists can integrate them into the collections already housed in archives. More in-depth research is

needed on the topic of authenticity and original order in image collections (particularly paintings and drawings). Future research will need to target arrangement and description of art records. While art records have been stored in the National Archives, the topic of art in archives has been largely unremarked on by American archival literature. Consequently, the whole topic requires a depth of research that one thesis is incapable of.

My hope is that this thesis clearly conveys the historical and documentary value of paintings and sketches to archivists and other professionals. Art records hold historical information of immense value to archives and to users of archives. By seeking out these visual statements, archives may add another form of documentation to their holdings. Already, archivists have embraced a number of diverse recording technologies. It is time for archives to invite an older recording technology into their holdings. Terry Cook, in reassuring archivists about the changes inherent in the postmodernist movement, writes that postmodernism embodies a “professional rebirth.”⁷ If archivists are to follow through with that rebirth, then they must seek out new records in addition to the more conventional and safer ones.

⁷ Terry Cook, “Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 35.

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