

The Archive as Liberation
Andre Bradley
calista lyon
Raymond Thompson Jr.
Harrison D. Walker
Savannah Wood

About the Artists

Andre Bradley is based in Philadelphia and utilizes photography, installation, and experimental lectures as forms of ideological resistance that foreground lived experiences of Blackness against the background of art. Bradley's first photo-book, *Dark Archives, 1–41*, was shortlisted for the Photo-Text Book Award at Les Rencontres d'Arles and the Paris Photo-Aperture Foundation First Photo Book Award. In *Where's Walter? (Gentle on My Mind)*, 2020, a digital cut-out of Walter Scott (1965–2015) "runs" in and out of America's National Parks landscape imagery. This reimagining of the children's book *Where's Waldo?* re-presents the public haunt of unarmed Black women and men killed by police. Part of the artist's series *American Slideshows*, 2015–ongoing, the work includes a soundtrack by NWA, Frank Sinatra, and Aretha Franklin.

calista lyon, an Australian-born artist and educator based in Fayetteville, Arkansas, creates installations, performances, and community-engaged works that explore memory and knowledge as forms of critical resistance in our time of neoliberal colonial capitalism. She utilizes counter-archival practice to make explicit the impact of gold extraction on Victoria's Indigenous Box-Ironbark forest and woodland ecologies. lyon challenges the colonial archive to raise awareness of its ongoing harm. Through her work, she offers a critical counter-archive that exposes the enormous environmental costs driven by nation-building.

Raymond Thompson Jr. is an interdisciplinary artist, educator, and visual journalist based in Austin, TX, and an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. His work explores how race, memory, representation, and place shape the Black environmental imagination of the North American landscape. His project *It's hard to stop rebels that time travel* combines archival fragments, historic ephemera, and his own images to highlight the stories of enslaved people, maroons, and runaways whose existence is only now revealed through traces in the collective

archive. This project radically re-envision's Black people's connection to the American landscape, focusing on the survival strategies and techniques of maroons as "freedom practices."

Harrison D. Walker is an artist in the Greater Boston area and the Manager of Studio Operations for the Digital Imaging and Visual Resources Department at Harvard Art Museums. *Footnotes* is a living archive of prints based on documents and images from public and personal archives that explore the unknown, the edge of civilization, and the frontier, using the V-2 Rocket as a vessel for investigation. It draws on his interests intersecting the printed object, the archive, chemistry, astronomy, and chance. *Footnotes* delves us further into the unknown by exploring the ideas and technologies foundational to space exploration.

Savannah Wood is an artist with deep roots in Baltimore and Los Angeles, using photography, text, and installation to explore how spirituality, domesticity, and relationships to place shape identities. Her multimedia project *Hard to Get and Dear Paid For* examines the life and legacy of Enoch George Howard, an enslaved man born in 1814 near Unity, Maryland. In his lifetime, Howard came to own the land where he and his family were held captive, including a parcel called Hard to Get and Dear Paid For. After his death, his daughter Martha used proceeds from his estate to invest in her husband's business, the influential *Afro-American Newspaper*. As the Executive Director of Afro Charities, Wood works to increase access to the 130+-year-old *AFRO-American Newspapers'* extensive archives. Like four generations of ancestors before her, she lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland, sharing and preserving Black stories.

Cover image: Savannah Wood, *Hard to Get and Dear Paid For* (projection cut), 2020

The Archive as Liberation

Helen Trompeteler
Deputy Director and
Director of Programs,
Silver Eye Center
for Photography

Archives shape our understanding of the past and influence how we imagine the future. Aware of this power, the artists featured in this exhibition engage with archives to craft powerful counter-narratives. Their authored stories reveal the transformative potential of critique and reinterpretation. Their art creates space for undetermined futures while honoring ancestral lineages, kinship, and resilience.

Harrison D. Walker draws on his interests in space exploration to critique its technologies and explore the complex boundaries between visibility and invisibility, knowledge and understanding. calista lyon's site-specific installation reflects on the industrial and ecological history of the Indigenous Box-Ironbark forest and woodland of Victoria, Australia. Savannah Wood delves into her ancestral connections to the land through filmmaking and assemblage works that unite the past, present, and future.

Raymond Thompson Jr. uses his own photographs alongside archival fragments and historical ephemera to expand narratives about the Black experience in the American landscape, restoring individual stories of survival from slavery. In a visceral critique of contemporary injustice, Andre Bradley's *Where's Walter? (Gentle on my Mind)* was created in response to the killing of Walter Scott (1965–2015) by a local police officer in North Charleston, SC. Through this interactive multimedia piece, Bradley creates a haunting depiction of police violence as told through the movement of the Black body within the contemporary American landscape.

Together, these artists offer diverse perspectives on the archive as a tool for liberation. This exhibition invites us into a space of critical reflection, encouraging empathy and a collective commitment to address seen and unseen histories.

Foreword

Aaron R. Turner
Co-Curator,
Assistant Professor
of Art, University of
Arkansas, School
of Art and Director,
Center for Art as
Lived Experience

Archives indeed inform us of our present and future via the past; they provide us with a multiplicity of ways to navigate times of grief and chaos by providing clarity and understanding.

To me, the Archive as a liberatory function is transformative:

1) Understanding one's self through the compiling of historical information to reinforce critical thinking

2) Changes in our belief systems, using the Archive as an empathetic method of communication with others, engaging with the intention of new dialogue






3) Ways of living/how we choose to navigate the world; opportunities to act on new perspectives; using the Archive to look at the past and present simultaneously to create new speculative spaces


These transformative processes provide a resilience, a form of liberation, through art making.

The five artists included in this publication and exhibition are engaged in resilience, ancestral understanding, counter-memory, translation, activism, tension, narrative, and critique. Through their artistic gestures, they illustrate freedom in the Archive.

The Archive as Liberation exhibition is co-curated with Aaron R. Turner, Assistant Professor of Art (Photography/Interdisciplinary Practice), University of Arkansas, School of Art and Director, Center for Art as Lived Experience. Turner is the author and organizer of The Archive as Liberation book, which will be published by Light Work (Syracuse University), where a second iteration of this project will be presented in Summer 2025.

	calista lyon	<i>To Unearth, To Excavate, To Exhume</i>	2025 Inkjet print on transparency film 40' x 30'	NFS
	calista lyon	<i>To Cut, To Fell, To Wound</i>	2025 Inkjet print on transparency film 40' x 30'	NFS
	calista lyon	<i>To Taint, To Pollute, To Contaminate</i>	2025 Inkjet print on transparency film 40' x 30'	NFS
	calista lyon	<i>A Precolonial Image Against a Postcolonial Landscape</i>	2025 Inkjet print on cotton rag & adhesive Installation dimensions 114.5' x 112.5'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Old Burial Ground</i>	2022 Photo Tex 96' x 149'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>New and Milly last seen in Trenton, NC.</i>	2023 Lightbox 10' x 8'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #23.198, Abandoned rose bush, Fort Barnwell, NC.</i>	2022 Archival inkjet print 20' x 15'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Untitled</i>	2023 Archival inkjet print 20' x 14.5'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #2.9542, Young Fish, Neuse River, Kinston, NC.</i>	2022 Photo Tex 15' x 20'	NFS

	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #85.518, Mami Wata, New Bern, NC.</i>	2023 Archival inkjet print 30' × 22.5'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #35.245758, -77.582313 (Richard Nobles, Bob Grady, Cater Grady, Daniel Smith), Kinston, NC.</i>	2022 Photo Tex 10.5' × 14'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #78.412 Blue Cotton, Snow Hill, NC.</i>	2023 Photo Tex 96' × 113'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Stop Sign, Croatan National Forest, NC.</i>	2021 Archival inkjet print 4.6' × 7'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #141.4392 Dover Bay Swamp, Dover, NC.</i>	2022 Photo Tex 30' × 40'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Petronella Breinburg Speaks</i>	2024 Archival inkjet print 14' × 11'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #110.958, Railroad Junction, New Bern, NC.</i>	2023 Archival inkjet print 20' × 16'	NFS
	Raymond Thompson Jr.	<i>Portal #35.245299, -77.383097 (Unknown) Dover Game Bay Land</i>	2022 Photo Tex 20' × 30'	NFS
	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Between Two Worlds</i>	2018 Silver Gelatin Print, Graphite 5' × 3.75' Open edition	\$1,000

	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Unidentified</i>	2017 Photo Tex 17' × 21.5'	NFS
	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Transit</i>	2022 Photo Tex 36' × 66.5'	NFS
	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Unknown Territories, Map I, Granary</i>	2018 Cyanotype, Gum Bichromate, Lithograph 12' × 8' Map I, Edition of 5	\$500
	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Unknown Territories, Map II, Fields</i>	2018 Cyanotype, Gum Bichromate, Lithograph 12' × 9' Map II, Edition of 5	\$500
	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Jupiter and its Moons</i>	2023 Silver Gelatin, Graphite 7' × 5' Open edition	\$1,000
	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Points of Origin</i>	2016/2023 Inkjet Print 10' × 8' Open edition	\$750
	Harrison D. Walker	<i>Footnotes</i>	2019–2025 Handmade box containing mixed prints and documents 12' × 9'	NFS
	Andre Bradley	<i>Where's Walter? (Gentle on My Mind)</i>	2020 Digital media Runtime: 6:20	NFS
	Andre Bradley	<i>Highway Memory Ithaca</i>	2019 Archival inkjet print 8.5' × 11' Edition of 5 (+2 AP)	NFS

	Andre Bradley	<i>Freshman</i>	2014 Archival inkjet print 2.5' x 3.5' Edition of 5 (+2 AP)	NFS
	Savannah Wood	<i>Seven Generations</i>	2025 Walnut dyed fabric, fiber test prints, jimsonweed, cochineal dyed yarn 25' x 60' x 11'	NFS
	Savannah Wood	<i>Untitled</i>	2024 Digital print, walnut frame, wax grave rubbing 47' x 38'	NFS
	Savannah Wood	<i>Hard to Get and Dear Paid For</i>	2020 Digital video, projection cut Runtime: 4:14	NFS
	Savannah Wood	<i>A Place to Rest</i>	2025 Image transfers, walnut dyed fabric and fiber test print, jimsonweed, photo frames 60' x 66' x 18'	NFS

The Archive as Liberation Symposium

Friday, March 7, 2025

Join artists, scholars, researchers, and community members for a day of conversations on Friday, March 7, 2025 exploring the work and themes presented in *The Archive as Liberation*.

10.00: Coffee and welcome remarks from Leo Hsu and Aaron Turner

Visitors are encouraged to explore the exhibition during morning coffee.

10.20–11.00 Panel 1: Empathy and the archive

Archives shape our understanding of the past and influence how we imagine the future. Aware of this power, how do the artists featured in this exhibition engage with archives to craft powerful counter-narratives against history and/or nurture and steward their own? How can the archive be a tool for liberation? How can empathy guide new ways of seeing? This panel represents a multiplicity of dialogues, concerns, approaches, visual expression, and representation. When or how does multiplicity intersect with empathy?

11.00–11.10 Break

11.15–12.00 Panel 2: Archives of media, and transformation

Artists in this exhibition including Raymond Thompson Jr., Andre Bradley, and Savannah Wood create works in which media, history, and lived experience co-exist. If news is created in the public sphere, how can it be recontextualized to create liberating alternative narratives? How can personal histories and genealogies be extracted and reclaimed in this context?

12.00–12.45: Lunch

1.00–1.45 Panel 3: Archives of technology, and care

calista lyon's work expresses personal and societal levels of grief and loss in terms of extraction and destruction of the land. Harrison D. Walker's work explores the advancement of technologies in abstract ways that nevertheless draw upon early childhood memories and his lived experiences. What is the relationship between technology and personal narrative? How do both artists interrogate and/or critique technology to elevate human stories? How does the archive address the global and personal?

1.55–2.15pm Unfinished stories: closing remarks

Silver Eye Center for Photography
Aaronel deRoy Gruber & Irving Gruber Gallery
4808 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Silver Eye Center for Photography is generously supported by our individual donors and lab members and by The Allegheny Regional Asset District, Arts, Equity, & Education Fund™, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Concept Art Gallery, Duolingo, The Fine Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, The Irving and Aaronel deRoy Gruber Charitable Foundation, The Joy of Giving Something, Inc., The Leonian Foundation, The McCune Foundation, The McKinney Charitable Foundation, Opportunity Fund, The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and other foundations and organizations.

The Archive as Liberation exhibition and symposium is produced with sponsorship support from Duolingo.



Explore this exhibition and other Silver Eye programs on the Bloomberg Connects app, where you will find additional audio/visual content.