Collecting the Future
A Personal History of an Archive

Kristine Stiles

Collecting the future entails maintaining a life suspended in time. As the collector imagines the archive, her voracious accrual of the past persistently mandates attention to the present. She is called upon to assemble and review, to sort and catalog, and to fill boxes on shelves, containers that breed ever more additions to the family, appendages piled on and under tables and eventually all over the floor. Once neat, the whole congregation becomes progressively chaotic, an accumulation that simultaneously resembles a massive crime scene and a party in glossolalist chorus. The invited guests, as well as the in-house criminals, consist of things from, about, and to artists, poets, and intellectuals; family, friends, and lovers; colleagues, students, and comrades; acquaintances, enemies, and strangers. These bits and pieces of evidence comingle in unique and imbricated histories of events, colloquia, lectures, seminars, classes, and discussions, as well as many other sources, and they share curious points of commonality between genealogy and experimental art.

These paper-participant-perpetrators hold the collector hostage for decades, insisting upon her touch and silent reminiscence, even as she hopes to succumb to amnesia, a kind of oblivion needed to cope with and survive the multitude of partial memories called forth by the archive. Throughout the task of endlessly filing and sorting these many things, emotions drift in and out of awareness along with veiled and splintered feelings and sensations sparked by the mere handling of the papers and objects, themselves haunted by the absences stalking her, lack that itself demands recognition as if contact with her hand could erase the dearth of memories. All the while, the documents hold their breath despite incessantly marching toward appreciation. They wait for the precipitous moment when, amidst this mess, one item will take pity on her and arbitrarily reveal its source and history in pristine clarity.

Sometimes, suddenly, without warning or logic, the past springs to life full blown in her conscious musings, arriving from a lone sheet of paper. The rest of the archive looks on, aloof, equivocal, hibernating for another embryonic reckoning. Such is the archive's ethos. Such is the archivist's gratification and misery.

Meanwhile, the papers in the boxes continue to grow over the years, stacking up images, programs, broadsides, letters, notes, emails, faxes, and greeting cards. Some may be valuable, others potentially surfeit. Thousands of inanimate things that once attested to the fullness of her life are gradually accruing lives of their own, waiting to be appreciated for their intrinsic value. As these things savor time, it empowers them. As they grow more confident of their future, they increasingly regard her as a trespasser, an interloper attempting to capture her past in their present future. Even so, and even from the inception of the archive, she anticipated that the scholarly and the curious would come to study, think about, and comment upon her papers, bringing previously inconceivably diverse alternative contexts, meanings, and understandings to them. Together, the papers, pictures, posters, and objects await rebirth in other minds able to offer their own stories about this collection, fresh narratives unencumbered by her. Vaguely, she has always grasped this fate. Accepting her inevitable invisibility, she ignores its emotional and intellectual consequences, and simply carries on the unending process of collecting, even as she edges closer to becoming a mere conduit for the things of her devotion, thereby enabling them to pass into other worlds and enrich other histories.

Finally, the decade, year, and day arrived when a charismatic expert on archives came to review her collection. Admired as an authority on what his renowned institution's library should acquire, he knew that the appraisal of her collection was an implicit evaluation of her judgment and experiences and whether the archive itself was worthy of the library … or not. She ushered him and his assistant upstairs to *that room* and departed, leaving them to pour through the collection, alert to the possibility that the boxes would present themselves as laudable … or not. To pass the time while waiting for judgment and to honor her esteemed guests, she brewed Samdayeon Honey Pear Tea, a South Korean delicacy grown on the volcanic southern island of Jeju in the Korea Strait. She had earlier baked sweet cardamom and saffron cookies to celebrate a positive decision, should her archive be acquired, or to sooth a rejection, should nearly a lifetime of hoarding be declined. At last, the two men reappeared downstairs in the sunroom. She gestured graciously

to the chairs next to the tea and cookies, but said nothing. The charming connoisseur opened the conversation: "Do you know how complicated your archive is?" She responded: "I suppose this question means that you do not want it?" Both of them were wrong: she knew and he wanted.

The very next day, a truck arrived, the room emptied, and the archive was whisked away to the world of professional librarians and archivists. Thereafter, when she visited a member of her rowdy clan, she was required to identify the precise number of an inhabitant's box and request it be sent to the library from its new home in a vast storage warehouse located somewhere in a nearby forest. Once in the library, waiting for reunion with one of her boxes, she would be required to place all of her belongings, except her computer and cell phone, in a locker, don cotton gloves, use only a pencil to take notes, and be supervised while working with files. Upon departure, she would be searched before leaving the building in case she had absconded with a cherished former possession. She has not stolen any of them … yet.

The room upstairs continues to be repopulated and those items are now periodically deposited into the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University, which now holds the *Kristine Stiles Collection, 1900-[ongoing]*. In what follows, several overlapping themes related to the constitution of this collection are considered: first, how the idea of time (indicated by the title "Collecting the Future") is useful for thinking about archiving; second, how preserving biographical and genealogical history belongs to a long family tradition; third, how the Hanns Sohm Happening & Fluxus Archive served as a model for "The Sohm Method," a title coined here to refer to Sohm's exemplary legacy; and fourth, how Californian and Eastern European artists came to dominate Stiles' Collection.

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"Collecting the Future" refers to an understanding of time derived from Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896). Introducing the term "indivisible limit," Bergson explained the concept as that "which divides the past from the future" and continued:

> When we think this present as going to be, it exists not yet, and when we think it as existing, it is already past. […] *Practically, we perceive only the past*

> [Bergson's emphasis], the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future.[1]

Thinking of Bergson's metaphysics of time in the context of collecting, the "indivisible limit" can apply to how time flows through life in interpenetrating evanescent events, some of which may be captured and recorded in the material residue and realities of an archive. In addition, Bergson identified "extensity," or corporeal extension in space, as "like a consciousness" [that] possesses in very truth the indivisibility of our perception; so, inversely, we may without scruple attribute to perception something of the extensity of matter."[2] Again, Bergson's concept of extensity may be considered as operant in the phenomenology of the archive, in so far as the archive is part of a time continuum simultaneous with corporeal locations, experiences, and memories, all of which constitute the materialization, interpellation, and perception in/of time. Indeed, collecting and archiving is essentially a wager with time past, a gamble on the future, and always already coexistent with the present. This temporal and physical experience is implied in two segments of the American poet Joseph Donahue's *The Secret History of Secrets* (2014):

> as if we are always a split second
> ahead of our own thought,
> so that the past is right "there,"
> lived again in the ripple …
> There's no real way,
> an authority assures me
> to locate an event in time
> or in space. There is only
> before and after, only here
> and there[3]

Such is the ethos of the archive in addition to its concrete materiality. But let us be absolutely clear: such philosophical and poetic understandings of Bergson's identification of "indivisible limit" and "extensity," as applied to collect-

1 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1991), 149–150.

2 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 219.

3 Joseph Donahue, "The Secret History of Secrets," edited by J. Peter Moore in "Poetry by Joseph Donahue," *Jacket 2* (December 17, 2014): https://jacket2.org/poems/poetry-joseph-donahue

ing and the objects of an archive, are stated here for the first time, a consideration that only emerged slowly over decades.

To present this temporal process another way and to convey the dynamism of the archive, the title, "Collecting the Future," alters the normative phrase, "collecting *for* the future," which implies a distant relationship to an indeterminant time, while the phrase "collecting *the* future," stipulates a concrete space in which what is collected already exists. Rather than archiving and conceptualizing a collection for an unknown time, the future may be understood as that which has already arrived to inform a future present in its own time. Living in time as duration and continuity means acknowledging that one disappears as the other enters the now in an attosecond, or one quintillion, or a million trillionth of a second. The archive may also be understood as the materialization of temporal phenomena perpetually passing into and beyond while existing in the present. To wit, the life of the archive represents a psycho-cognitive process in which objects are assembled *as if* the future is *already realized* in and through the very things in one's hands. "Collecting the future" is based on the conviction that the future is inherent in all that one is and does. The now is the record of that time.

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Having begun with an abstruse explanation of time as essential to the archive, a more mundane account is now at hand. Succinctly put, collecting provided a distraction from the present of a challenging childhood in which I willfully absorbed myself in books, research, and papers, intellectual experiences that abetted unconscious emotional repression of repeated traumatic experiences. That said about the past, as the nascent archive unfolded over several decades in the future, it proved a useful way to organize life itself, especially as the histories of those things collected were themselves the residue of direct experience and could be researched and remembered—even if the past remained blocked. Eventually, the idea of an "archive" crept to mind in San Francisco in the late 1970s though numerous overlapping experiences. As a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, Professor Peter Selz was my doctoral advisor, and I worked with him in his archive, carefully observing and learning how he organized his library and personal papers. In addition, as the assistant to artist Bruce Conner for eight years, I gained a pro-

found respect for his organization of files, while failing miserably to acquire his notoriously impeccable critical approach to everything in life. Friendships with many other California artists, especially Peter d'Agostino, Lynn Hershmann Leeson, Mark Thompson, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and many others, was equally instructive for how they approached documenting their legacies. Researching at that time in the San Francisco Museum of Art's library, I also worked under the watchful eye of the towering figure of Eugenia Candau, SF MoMA's librarian from 1968 to 2001; she was and remains the embodiment of dedication to knowledge and its preservation.

During this period, I also spent a lot of time going to poetry readings, hanging out at the Caffe Trieste, the "poet's café" in North Beach (where I lived at the time), and meeting poets at City Lights Book Store. That is how I began collecting material by poets, and where I befriended Jack Micheline. A flamboyant painter, street poet, and one of the original Beat poets, Jack spent a lot of time at our apartment. He told me that he had left a collection of papers in a barn in upstate New York and, not long after, I flew there and retrieved as much as I could of it. Also, frequent travel abroad on dissertation research, in a still divided Europe, resulted in life-long relationships with many artists and the resulting necessity to preserve the evidence of those friendships and all that they taught. Having rescued some of Jack's papers, and already collecting family materials, I began thinking more systematically about collecting, even though it felt too pretentious at that time to describe such activity as "archiving."

This rich and imbricated history could never have unfolded without the direct impact of, and my mother's respect for, letters. Katherine Haller Rogers Dolan, known as Kitty, acquired the habit from her father, my maternal grandfather,[4] who learned it from both is his mother and his father, who

4 Dr. Frederick Rand Rogers (1894–1972), a radical philosopher-educator, writer, and crusader in the field of physical education and "physical fitness" (a phrase attributed to him), and inventor of the Physical Fitness Index. Grandfather wrote a number of books. *Treason in American Education a Case History* (1949) is a treatise on and history of Stanford University that exposed what he considered the amoral, short-sightedness of science in cynical materialism, anti-religion, and the cult of academic license. See https://www.readinkbooks.com/product/7785/Treason-in-American-Education-A-Case-History-Rogers-Frederick-Rand. Eight years earlier he brought out *Dance: A Basic Educational Technique* (1941), auguring his later collaboration with Joseph Pilates on the pamphlet *The Pilates Pamphlet: Return to Life Through Contrology* (1957), and the concept

learned it from his father, and so on into the past.[5] Archives, per se, were not discussed, but Kitty saved everyone's letters and I adopted her habit even as a young girl.[6] Without a doubt, however, the twenty-page, single-spaced, typed epistles that our family regularly received from her father, our Grandfather Rogers, impressed me the most. Grandfather wrote to us on many topics, not the least of which was how his only grandchildren should be raised and how we five should behave. We dreaded and treasured his letters.[7] Kitty also drummed into us how history both undermines and determines everything, a conviction that she enforced with attempts to impress us with our "fine genealogy," a heritage which we were expected to honor and emulate. Thus, did lineage and legacy contribute to archiving.

As if the weight of all these ancestors was not burden enough, Kitty also informed us about both her grandfather Dr. George Spalatin Easterday, Mayor of Albuquerque, New Mexico from 1892 to 1893, and his wife, our reputed great grandmother, Katherine Haller (called Kittie, after whom my mother was named). Kittie's father had struck it rich in the California Gold Rush and she inherited a fortune that enabled her to travel the world alone after the death of Dr. Easterday. She shipped home all manner of fine furniture,

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of "contrology" being a way "to develop the physique to high levels of strength and beauty, under the control of the mind."

5 Kitty's paternal ancestry included her grandmother Josephine Rand Rogers (1869–1950), a president of The League of Women Voters, and politically active in the Temperance Movement and in passing Child Welfare Laws; her grandfather Frederick J. Rogers (ca. 1860–1945), a professor of physics at Stanford University, and his father, John Rankin Rogers (1838–1901), third Governor of the State of Washington, who, with the State Legislature, instituted the "Barefoot Schoolboy Act," providing a law for state funding to equalize support for free public education.
See: http://apps.leg.wa.gov/oralhistory/timeline_event.aspx?e=10.
Throughout the 1890s, he also authored many essays with populist themes such as "The Rights of Man and The Wrongs of Man," 1893; "Homes for the Homeless," 1895; and "Free Land: The Remedy for Involuntary Poverty […]," 1897, among many other articles devoted to social injustice.

6 When my mother died, I found all of my letters to her since the age of five in a folder with my name, just like the folders she kept for each one of my other four siblings.

7 Once when I was twelve, he sequestered me in the living room for a "conversation." It was, in effect, a Socratic model of teaching critical thinking, and began with benign questions like, "Who is your best friend?" followed by endless strings of queries as to why and how and when. We kept this question/answer up for about four hours before I ran out, calling for my mother to "Make him stop!" I heard his response to my mother's entreat: "She's fine. It took." I do credit him for the joy of deliberate reasoning.

prized objects, paintings, and jewelry, which we inherited. For pleasure, she designed and painted Haviland Limoges china with twenty-four karat gold pieces, melted down in her own kiln, and signed on the back with her initials, KHE, using the liquid gold. The plates remain in the family today, as does a box of Kittie's natural blond hair, a length of about thirty inches that never grayed. This memento preserved a Victorian tradition of keeping locks of hair of beloved deceased family members. My sisters and I played with Kittie's hair, winding it into a blond bun on top of our brown-haired heads.

As if this pomp and history was not enough for five children to absorb, early on we were also informed that Kittie was not, in fact, the mother of our mother's mother Beatrice. Kittie, it was said, had been "barren" and her husband, "the good Dr. Easterday," had been a notorious philanderer. As the story goes, after his lover was found pregnant, Dr. Easterday whisked the woman off to St. Louis where she gave birth to Beatrice, who was immediately adopted by Kittie, which is how such "indiscretions" were handled by the powerful then. To this day, the identity of the woman who bore my maternal grandmother is unknown. Wild speculation continues to ensue down through the generations of our family. My own research suggests—with little doubt—that the actual mother of my grandmother was a young married Italian woman, who had recently moved with her husband to Albuquerque from the ancient village of Fornovolasco in the Province of Lucca, Italy. I have a picture of her: she was small and fine-featured like my own tiny, 4'8" grandmother Beatrice. Of this I will write no more, except to add that this mystery contributed to our family's collective fascination with archives—fanciful and real.

Regarding my father's background, little was said. As far as my mother was concerned, his pure Irish lineage was of no consequence: "I married your father," she often told us, "to clean up an overbred gene pool." My father, Paul, countered this rude dismissal with the actual fact that his father had been a wealthy, highly educated Boston church decorator, trained in Italy, and who had won the second bid to renovate St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. That truth did not quell Kitty's disregard. For me, this information proved to be more evidence to be collected and stored.

We five children could never evade these stories, as our very home constituted an archive of sorts, being full of the trappings of that bygone prosperity: we ate from Kittie's china dishes painted in gold; we played on the gorgeous rugs she sent from the Orient; we sat on her fine carved furniture. We also read from bookcases full of Grandfather Rogers' Harvard Classics, and more. Meanwhile our parents struggled to pay the mortgage, went bankrupt

repeatedly, drank, partied, loved each other intensely, philandered, fought constantly, and finally divorced. I married Mr. Stiles at twenty in 1967, and escaped to California, divorcing five years later. Thus, should it come as no surprise that part of practice of "collecting the future" developed from family annals.

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It felt like eons before arriving as a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley in 1974. There my dissertation topic became the "Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS)," which took place in London throughout September 1966 and to which artists from over fifteen countries sent works or came in person to participate. DIAS included performances, poetry, music, installations, lots of explosives and the arrest of the organizers,[8] as well as a three-day symposium poised in the middle of the month at which artists spoke and discussed the use of destruction in art. While doing dissertation research on DIAS in April 1978, I ran into the American conceptual and performance artist Tom Marioni on a street in Amsterdam. He had founded the Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA) in 1970, and the raw, early alternative space brought many national and international artists to San Francisco. Tom greeted me with two sentences that literally changed my life: "Are you going to Vienna for the International Performance Festival? I'm performing there." Knowing nothing about it, I responded instantly, "YES!" and departed that evening on a student Eurail Pass for Vienna by overnight train.

Arriving next morning, I found a hotel, checked a map for the site of the festival's main venue in the old university quarter in Vienna's center, and on my way stopped at the charming Café Diglas for coffee. I did not know at the time that this was one of Vienna's renowned cafes, founded in 1888. There, also by chance, I met the German artist Ecke Bonk, as we noticed that we were both examining material related to the festival. Bonk (then going by the

8 The organizer, German artist Gustav Metzger, and his co-organizer the Irish poet John Sharkey, were arrested and tried ten months later at The Central Criminal Court of England and Wales, commonly referred to as the Old Bailey, on grounds that they had exhibited an obscene event, performed by members of Wiener Aktionismus, Hermann Nitsch, Otto Mühl, Günter Brus, Peter Weibel, accompanied by the American artist Al Hansen and others.

name Aquinada) was already exhibiting an installation on the staircase of the primary site of the festival, the Contemporary Art Gallery run by the Viennese curator Ursula Krinzinger. We become lifelong friends after witnessing and discussing for days and nights performances by Ulay & Abramović, Charlemagne Palestine, Hermann Nitsch, Laurie Anderson, Stuart Brisley, Simone Forti, Heinz Cibulka, Raša Todosijević, and Marioni, of course, among many others.

When the Festival in Vienna ended and moved on to Yugoslavia, Ecke Bonk and I went too. We drove in his car first to Zagreb, where we saw performances, and then on to Belgrade where we attended all the events at the infamous Belgrade Student Cultural Center (SKC), founded in 1970. The building had previously housed the offices of the Yugoslavian secret service and still retained its aura.[9] Among the performances I remember to this day were Sanja Iveković's *Party* (fig. 1.1), Raša Todosijević's Was Ist Kunst, and especially Jürgen Klauke's *The Harder They Come*. Klauke's poignant action appeared to be a self-critique, as the handsome, elegant, slim, erotic, aloof artist—wearing all white and bedecked in necklaces and rings—walked, ran, and danced to Jimmy Cliff's "The Harder They Come," while stepping through a circular maze of bricks tied with strings. The faster he moved, the more entangled he became in the string, tripping and falling to the floor repeatedly until exhaustion, shattering the invulnerable image he presented.

Where this history dovetails with the topic of collecting is a dinner in a Belgrade restaurant with many of the artists to which Ecke and I were invited by the Serbian art historian and curator, Bojana Pejić. At the end of an exuberant meal with lots of talk and joking, she passed her paper placemat around the table and asked everyone to sign it as a memento of the historic occasion. When the placemat came to me, I started to pass it on, but she stopped me, asking, "Why aren't you signing?" I answered: "I am only a student and no one will remember me." She replied, "You will be remembered. Please sign." I did. Her acknowledgment mattered then and still today, for this experience, together with attending all three venues of the International Performance Festival, contributed to the foundation of my direction as a scholar and a collector. Also, many experiences in Belgrade prompted the beginning of my love affair with Eastern Europe, still divided behind the "Iron Curtain."

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9 For an account of how the artists obtained this building, see my essay, "Cloud with Its Shadow," in *Marina Abramović* (London: Phaidon, 2008), 33–94: https://sites.duke.edu/aahvspdf/files/2020/11/Stiles_MarinaAbramovic.pdf

Figure 1.1: Sanja Iveković (center) performing "Party" in the Belgrade Student's Cultural Center, in 1978 with participation by Bojana Pejić (far right) Ecke Bonk and Kristine Stiles (standing far left).

Photo: Nebojša Čanković. Courtesy of the Arhiva SKC Beograd.

I was captivated by the generations of Eastern European artists' psychic intensity and presentation of the hard truths of life that they conveyed in their work, and I eventually made plans to return.

During these halcyon days, and upon returning to Vienna, I made an appointment to visit the Sohm Archive, then in Sohm's home in Markgröningen, Germany (before it moved to the Stattsgalerie in Stuttgart), and there I

learned from the master himself. Hanns Sohm (1921–1999) gave me permission to explore and study every aspect of his archive. He answered endless questions each time I visited between 1978 and 1980. On one visit, Sohm and his wife invited me to live in their home and included me in nightly dinners, during which Sohm regaled us with stories about all the artists he knew. He was especially grateful to Wolf Vostell, who he credited not only with turning his attention to collecting the counterculture of the time, namely happenings and Fluxus, but also with tutoring Sohm on their avant-garde activities and introducing him to new artists. It was also Vostell who encouraged Sohm, along with the Viennese action artists—Hermann Nitsch, Günter Brus, and Otto Mühl—to attend DIAS.

Sohm's systematic retrieval of every scrap of ephemera from DIAS—similar to Pejić collecting signatures on her paper placemat—reinforced for me the significance of these mementos and traces of people and activities. Sohm also took many photographs during DIAS, and his images, along with his documentation and ephemera, contributed to my dissertation's reconstruction of unique details of DIAS, as well as its ethos. Because Sohm was so attentive, not only to every detail but also to the character of artists, studying in his archive and talking to him enabled me to grasp the individual character of the artists at DIAS, which was invaluable when I eventually interviewed most of them. Sohm also conveyed the DIAS artists' intense competitiveness, the macho grandstanding of some, and the vulnerability and sensitivity of others. I've never been clear about why Sohm took me under his tutelage, but I did recognize myself in his voracious curiosity, hunger for knowledge, and stamina to follow though, despite the twenty-six-year difference in our ages. What I admired most in Sohm was his fearlessness, his unselfconscious effort to acquire knowledge, his patience, excellent judge of character, and decisive recognition of opportunists.

All of these aspects of Sohm's approach to the world and to collecting constitute what I fondly identified above as the "Sohm Method," which, in the practical sense of building a focused archive, included the following organizing principles: 1) emphasis on a particular area of art and its histories; 2) comprehensive documentation of all the artists, poets, composers, curators, and any other related individuals involved in that particular focus; 3) collections of artists' and scholars' correspondence and writings on related topics in books, journals, catalogs, magazines (the more obscure the better) and ephemera; 4) collections of related films, videos and relics of actions; and 5) collection of related kinds of artistic activities such as DIAS, which was neither a "hap-

pening" nor "Fluxus" (the titular identification of Sohm's archive), but which was (and remains) overlapping in substance and practice, along with other named groups such as the Situationist International, Spur, Viennese Actionism, ZERO, concrete music and poetry, and other related materials such as artist's books and underground literature.

After this extraordinary, unexpected, life-altering research and tutorial in the "Sohm Method," and after finishing the dissertation and beginning to teach at Duke University, I did return in 1991 to Eastern Europe. On that trip, I drove from Vienna across Hungary and along the northern border of Romania to the area of Bukovina, renowned for its painted churches in the monasteries and towns and villages of Humor, Moldoviţa, Pătrăuți, Probota, Suceava, Sucevița, and Voroneţ, all of which I visited. While in a hotel in the mountains near Suceava, someone put an explosive on the hatchback of my rental car blowing out the windows. This was a dangerous period in Romania only a year and a half after the assassination of the former dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, on Christmas Day 1989. I immediately departed, driving back across Romania in one day. After crossing back into Hungary, I vowed to return, telling my travelling companion that, as the Romanians who put the plastic explosive on the car did not know that I specialized in destruction in art, I took their explosive as an invitation to return.

I returned to Romania six months later in 1992, and went straight to Bucharest where I began research on contemporary Romanian artists. Once again, I had the great good fortune to meet and work with not only Dan and Lia Perjovschi, now life-long friends, but also Ion Bitzan, Ion Grigorescu, and Paul Neagu, among others. On another trip to Eastern Europe, I visited Milan Knížák, Jan Mlčoch, Zorka Ságlová, and Petr Štembera in Prague, among others. My work with all these artists and the materials that I gathered eventually began to fill my archive. I was fortunate to have met them at that time, soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall and before they became too famous, with too little time, to have the kind of deep conversations we enjoyed. What I found in Eastern Europe was a feeling something akin to how the novelist Richard Powers described the survival of trees: "The blackest despair at the heart of them gets pressed to diamond."[10] That's how Eastern European artists seemed to me in those years. I, too, was trying to turn my struggle into diamonds in the form of an archive. Hardship had pressed me into living in the future, and I

10 Richard Powers, *The Overstory: A Novel* (W.W. Norton & Company, NY and London: 2018), 6.

identified with Eastern European artists, who, in turn, seemed to grasp those troubled aspects of me. That's how it came to be that they comprise fully a quarter of my archive.

In closing, let me now return to how my archive came to be housed in the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University, whose mission it is to create "knowledge in service to society." I had been approached by the Getty in Los Angeles regarding the acquisition of my archive, and they sent a librarian to my home in Durham to look at the collection. This person spent several hours going through boxes and reading very personal material. When the woman finally came down stairs, she explained: "The Getty does not acquire the library of anyone who is not an artist but, in your case, because you have been an artist and worked with so many artists, we will acquire your archive and give you a special title." I have forgotten the precise term she suggested, but it was flattering, and I was thrilled that my collection might go to the Getty. Next, she asked me how much money I wanted for the archive. I laughed and replied that I no idea how to evaluate it. But she pressed me for an answer so I replied, smiling, "How about $500,000!" She said she would get back to me and departed for LA.

After about six months and hearing nothing further, I called her and asked if the Getty was going to acquire my archive. In a curt voice she replied: "The Getty does not acquire art historian's archives, but in your case, we would accept it as a gift." Furious that she had rifled through my archive, especially love letters, and that she had tricked me into putting an arbitrary value on my collection, I responded: "If I am going to gift my archive to any institution, it will be to Duke University, which has supported me all these years." I hung up. The rest is history. I gave my archive as a gift to Duke, asking for only three points in the agreement: 1) that family papers, historical, and archival material remain in the collection; 2) that I continue to be permitted to contribute to the archive as long as I live; and 3) that the library would require users to secure my permission to use the archive until my death. The library agreed and that was that.