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A Theatre Full of Junk:

Haunted by an Unruly Archive

Introduction

Since the middle of 2021, I have been cleaning up a theatre. To put this perhaps more pointedly, I have been slowly and painfully sorting through an astonishingly large mess that I did not create. This theatre is named The Annexe, and it is part of the University of Tasmania's Inveresk campus in Launceston. It was stuffed to bursting point with theatrical miscellanea from past shows, teaching, research projects and conferences that had been accumulating since the building was opened in 2002, in layers and layers of stacked, packed, piled, crammed and stowed props, construction materials, flats, set pieces, papers, books, technologies, videos and costumes. While not specifically listed in my job description, with the sole theatre technician on long term health leave (and eventually resigning) I decided this was an 'Other Academic Duty as Required' and started cleaning up. It was ostensibly a decision about occupational health and safety, but perhaps more truthfully, it was addressing an ongoing mental and emotional strain on myself and my colleagues in the Theatre Program. We couldn't take a step without tripping over, bumping against, or otherwise having to manoeuvre around the past.

It has been exhausting work lifting, sorting, cleaning, and undoing the zip-ties, gaffer tape, knotted nylon cord and twisted wire employed in creative, but wildly shoddy fabrications. One brief example is the two-metre-long makeshift hook I discovered in the theatre ceiling. Only after several attempts to remove it from the narrow cavity between the ceiling and roof did I find out it was not simply a length of timber. Affixed at one end with brown packing tape was a crowbar. Peeling back the tape, I found a name engraved. 'TATNELL'. As I put the brown tape in the bin and added the timber to the storeroom, I wondered what I should do with this bar of hardened steel. Placing it with the other tools, I speculated about who Tatnell might be, and what they were trying to achieve with their improvised hook. No colleagues had knowledge of this Tatnell, nor the purpose of this object, so imagination was all I had. The physical work brought with it mental work. Should I try to find Tatnell? And what of all the other names inscribed throughout this building? The most precarious of these were the many names written in the thick dust on a ledge high up in the theatre, above the lighting bars. A history lies here, a

stratigraphy of students who elevated themselves (mechanically) and left their mark. For people including Keith, Dave, Tash and Jordie, these inscriptions speak to the way the building becomes an object to which cherished memories are fixed. Should I wipe this ledge clear, and erase these names, or should I document them? How would I do so?

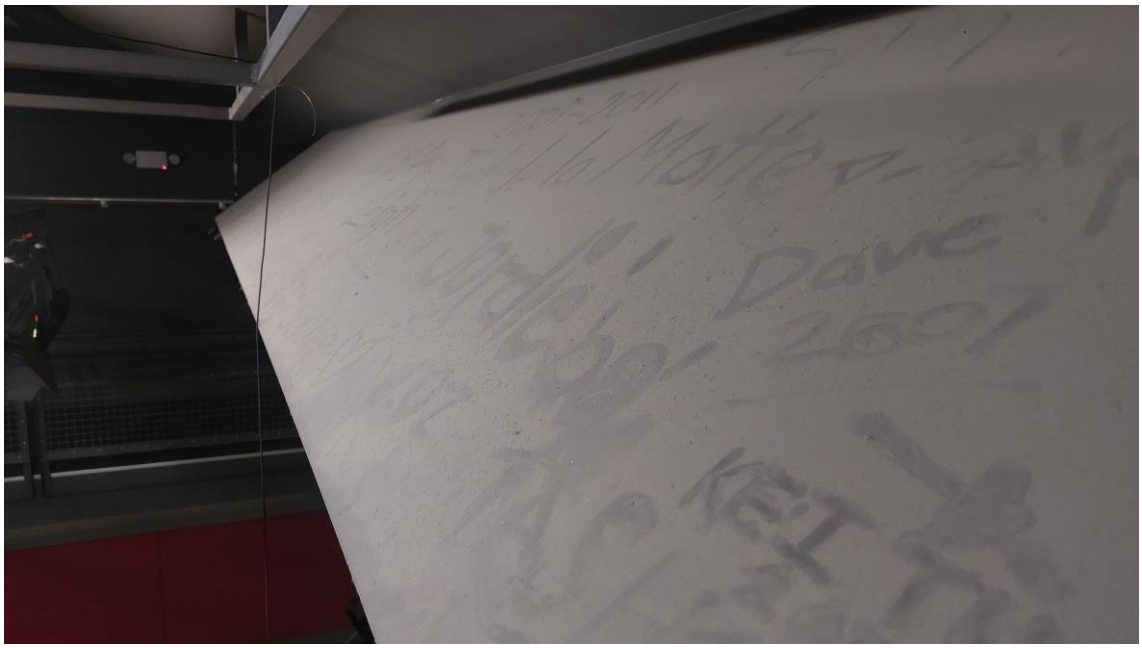

Image 1: Past students names written in dust. Image credit: Asher Warren.

To introduce this context states something likely obvious to the reader: the truth universally acknowledged that (university) theatres accumulate junk; the centre (for the arts) cannot hold; and mere anarchy is loosed upon those poor souls tasked with keeping these spaces in some semblance of order. The point of this essay, however, is not a lamentation; but rather to ask what these things left behind might tell us about the theatre that has been made here. By this, I do not mean to reconstruct the performances that took place—as these were captured in a large collection spread across VHS tapes, miniDV tapes, DVDs and Hard Disk Drives. Rather, I am interested in the ways of working, values and aspects of a cultural identity that these remnants might divulge. As a regional city on an island, with a strong sense of colonial history and tradition, the accumulated junk in Launceston's Annexe Theatre might tell us something about the culture of theatre making in this building; and the relationship between a theatre program and the University it operates within. As such, the remainder of this essay explores a set of 'findings': which is to say, objects I have found, and the places within the building I found them.

In following these findings, I did not set out with a clearly defined methodology, but much like the process of cleaning up, have simply started at the beginning and worked one step at a time, iteratively, picking up and *processing* these objects. As such, this essay may at times seem erratic, veering from considerations of object-hood and materialism(s), distinctions between archive and archaeology, and toward interpretive frameworks that speak more clearly to the social world these objects were entangled in.

In this last regard, I draw on Diana Taylor's formulation of the *scenario* (2003) to frame these objects as part of the embodiment of an underlying repertoire and its situational distinctiveness, and Avery Gordon's theorisation of *haunting* (2008) as a particular structure of feeling (after Raymond Williams) that draws attention to unresolved social violence.

I will argue that an attention to these things—costumes, banners, stage weapons, posters, plays, teaching materials, personal effects and correspondences—reveals a culture of resourcefulness and improvised problem solving, and a particular strand of theatrical realism. Moreover, I will suggest this 'junk' discloses a theatre making culture caught in a temporal trap: oriented toward the future, but imagining that future as a continuation of the past. Finally, to draw these scenarios and hauntings together, I consider the specific institutional pressures and preoccupations at play, and the tensions emergent in the relationship between this theatre program and the larger university. In doing so, this essay explores an interplay between 'thing-power', theatrical power, and the power administered by institutions.

Thing-Power, withdrawal, effect and affect

The first set of findings start with an aged green Tupperware bowl. Originally designed to store a head of iceberg lettuce, it now held keys. Two-thirds full, it held *many* keys. Keys to cupboards, doors, padlocks, pianos, moneyboxes, filing cabinets, lockers, and display cases, and keys to locks that had long since been changed. But despite these dozens of keys, there were still doors in The Annexe Theatre which no key in that container could unlock. One of these was on a small safe, which tantalisingly jingled as I wheeled it out and handed it over to staff from the Infrastructure and Services Development division. Another door I could not open was the cleaners' cupboard. I found my way in, however (with help from the cleaners) and discovered another smaller door into the cavernous expanse underneath the tiered seating bank. Cables of all sorts snaked around, and beside stacks of cleaning products were an assortment of other things—including two large cardboard moving boxes covered in dust, and some computer parts.

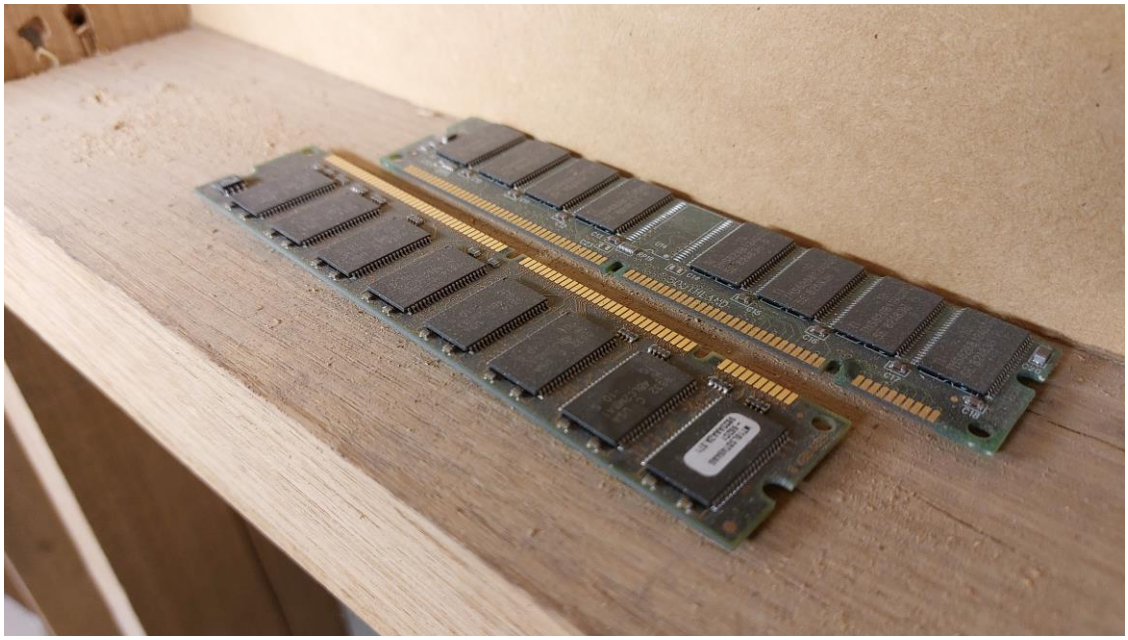

Image 2: Sticks of Random Access Memory (RAM) found underneath seating bank. Image credit: Asher Warren.

The computer parts were two sticks of *random-access memory*, or RAM. They were long removed from any computer, and at roughly 20 years old, quite obsolete. Pondering how did these (and only these) computer parts end up here, I supposed they were most likely left over from an upgrade. The function of RAM in a computer is roughly equivalent to human 'short term memory'. It is used to temporarily store data and bring it back up instantly. It does not 'keep' the data after you shut down your computer: the memory is gone the moment electricity is removed. RAM offers us another way to think about the theatre and memory, and the ontological debates about performance ephemerality. The way RAM works is an analogue to the experience of viewing (and making) performance: lived in the moment, but dead as soon as the event is over. Some parts of this experience get filtered into long-term memory, or inscribed into an archive for keeping beyond the event. RAM, however, is not an archival media, and *these* particular sticks of RAM are empty. They only held memories when they were part of a whole computer. As a container for lost memory, the RAM stands as both metaphor and literal object that illuminates the grey area between the process of making a theatrical event and its archive.

Given the focus of this essay on objects, it seems pertinent to address the materiality of these sticks of RAM, and materiality in general. This is not to identify their constituent elements or capacity (a few hundred megabytes), but the capacity for such materials to have agency, and the limits to what we might know of these objects. I am referring here to the scholarly turn gathered under 'new materialisms', which broadly posits that objects are not quite as 'objective' as western, anthropocentric culture has made them out to be. I must, however, admit that for me, these sticks of RAM did not shimmer, shimmy, or vibrate with energetic vitality, like the glove, pollen, rat, cap and stick that Jane Bennett encountered in a Baltimore drain (2010, 4). While they may have a vitality

"not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them" (5), this essay is preoccupied with these human contexts. In the same manner, Graham Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) adopts the philosophical position that the RAM sticks withdraw from our knowing, and from their relations with other things, and we are "only half-aware that they are more than our theory or praxis takes them to be at any moment" (Harman 2020, 19). However, in engaging with these objects, it is my own agency and interactions that chart my course: I make no claims to be a 'modest witness' as either Robert Boyle or Donna J. Haraway would put it (2018, 23), and acknowledge my role as the central conduit through which these objects might reach the reader—just as Bennett is the conduit for the energetic vitality for her glove, pollen, rat, cap and stick. If this project is aligned with a new materialism, it is more empirical in nature, indebted to a suite of methods developed by scholars including John Law (2009), Bruno Latour (2005) and Annemarie Mol (2010, 2002), who are also focused on the agency of things, but specifically on investigating this agency through discernible interactions within an ecology (or network). The RAM sticks leap out as notable in this context not because they have done something as part of a computer (they are not attached to one) but rather, they demonstrate the way materials can alter perception: they bring a metaphor that connects place (the theatre seating bank), activity (making and watching theatre) and the functioning of memory.

Repertoire

Through the collection of scripts and posters I have found, I have pieced together a picture of the 16 years prior to my arrival at The Annexe. Read alongside the AusStage database, this picture is of a text-centric repertoire. Every few years there has been a Shakespeare (with varying degrees of adaptation), interspersed with Greek tragedies and plays by Brecht, Churchill, Albee, Ionesco, Ibsen, Williamson, Murray-Smith and Cornelius, to name a few. Repertoire, Diana Taylor argues, "enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing-in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (2003, 20). If, however, we take Taylor's assertion that the "repertoire requires presence" (20), then the list of productions only give the slightest hint at the *culture* of theatre making, the ways of working and the values that informed these productions. Taylor uses the concept of the 'scenario' to engage with the layering of embodied knowledge with more fixed texts and narratives in any given performance. While my reading of these objects is conspicuously lacking *people*, I would argue that many of these objects might speak to scenarios, that is, "meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviours, and potential outcomes" (Taylor 2003, 23), on *behalf* of people, as well as on their own.

Image 3: A large vinyl banner painted with a Union Jack. Image credit: Asher Warren.

This brings us to our next 'finding': a very large Union Jack, hand-painted on a heavy-duty vinyl banner. Rolled up and stored atop a costume cabinet, alongside rolls of canvas, chiffon and cotton, taking this flag down required the assistance of two former students, who were employed as casual staff once the scale of the clean-up required became apparent. The banner was approximately 2.5 metres wide and 6 metres long, and it was only when we took it somewhere large enough to unroll it that we could make sense of it. On the other side was a Coca-Cola logo, which presumably covered the side of a truck. If the sheer material size and weight of this object were difficult to handle, what might we make of it being quite literally a flag for both capitalism and colonialism? The Union Jack attests to the influence of the coloniser on Australia's theatrical history, which ranges from the canon of texts which fill our stages, through to the influence of British methods in Australian theatre training programs (Hay et al. 2021). I am more struck, however, by the visible traces of *making* evident. On close inspection, under the blue, red and white paint, pencilled guidelines can be made out. The meticulous line tracing and brushwork on a repurposed material, as well as the storage of this flag for future use suggests a scenario where there is a willingness to invest considerable amounts of time, but not necessarily money. It feels exhaustingly thrifty, created from the kind of deep reserves of time and energy that I faintly recall having as an undergraduate student. Moreover, it speaks to a theatre culture with a do-it-yourself ethos; ingenuity and skills that, as Arrighi and Watt note in their exploration of regional theatre histories, are often wound together with a regional connection to industry and self-sufficiency (2011). The

Annexe was, after all, formerly a precision tool factory; part of a larger complex of railway workshops that operated from the 1870s through to the 1990s.

Image 4: Some of the prop weapons in the 'armoury'. Image credit: Asher Warren.

It is with the grit of these heritage listed, oil-soaked timbers of The Annexe in mind that I wish to introduce another set of findings. These things were kept out of student reach on a mezzanine galley-way termed 'the armoury', spread across a locked beige cabinet and a 44-gallon drum. There were piles of prop guns: muskets, pistols, machine guns, sniper sights and space-rays, as well as swords, knives, shivs, daggers, maces, carvers, dirks, katanas, axes, halberds, sabres and bayonets. And of course, these were of no use theatrically without a supply of explosive caps to make them go 'bang' and capsules to hold fake blood. There was something about these items, however, that was more than simply suggesting a scenario where violence, or the threat of violence, was depicted on stage. In striving for certain qualities of realism—the knife should look very much like an actual knife, the gun must make the sound, and blood must be visible—they did not seem to require anyone to wield them to foreshadow the harm they would inflict. Yet while the objects themselves seem invested in a type of realism, the larger scenario of violence seems unlikely to fool anyone. There is something about the armoury that feels tawdry, or 'tacky'. My first thought was that these weapons have been relied upon to prop up performances, delegated the task of providing the threat of violence, rather than this falling to the actor. This thought, however, raises a second question about the plays that call for such weapons, and more particularly, the creative processes that led to this collection. With all the ways that theatre can engage in the depiction of violence, this feels like the product of choices that were rushed, of decisions that went awry, of dead-ends that these objects became the solution to. Or perhaps, these objects illuminate at some level, a fixation with weaponry. After all, during its previous incarnation as a precision tool workshop, The Annexe most notably manufactured parts and gauges for aircraft and weapons during the Second World War. Arguably, this violence might be

aligned with the literary genre described by Jim Davidson as 'Tasmanian Gothic' (1989), a "synthesising vision" of Tasmania's complex island identity that has been revived in the new millennium in books, stages and screens. Certainly, Tasmania's history is one with no shortage of violence, from its colonial atrocities through to contemporary abuses, most recently documented in the harrowing Tasmanian Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, released in 2023.

There is one last example that stands as a kind of synecdoche for the larger building, which is the costume collection. Due to the number of garments (thousands) and the way they had been crammed into every imaginable space and surface in the costume room, this required the most labour to clean, by some margin. Sorting and culling this huge pile of clothes, shoes, hats, and other items took weeks. As we sorted, we noticed almost every item had an identification number. These numbers were to identify the items in a database, which had been created on an aged Apple computer in the costume room, which nobody knew the password for. There were no instructions or guides to be found, but some years earlier, a former student had been employed for weeks to describe, photograph, and catalogue everything. While I was curious about this database, it became apparent by the end of our culling that it was a catalogue of junk. Around three quarters of the collection was unusable: stained, broken, ill fitting, or otherwise unable to last more than a performance or two. The tremendous effort undertaken to document these things felt tragically futile. It summoned a scenario of misdirected energy, of a grand plan to systematise that forsakes the very thing it seeks to keep track of. With most of the collection now disposed of or recycled, this inaccessible catalogue of junk has become a ghostly archive.

Memory, Affect, Departures and Ghosts

Returning to the Tupperware bowl of keys, I found one set that unlocked cupboards underneath the sinks in the toilets. There wasn't anything in the men's, but in the women's, I found three file boxes. Each box was marked 'SCRIPTS' in the same red handwriting. Inside, unsurprisingly, were scripts. The first box was full of photocopies of plays by Pinter, Molière, Ionesco, Tennessee Williams and Aristophanes: the grainy, black margined copies that fill the cupboards, drawers, and filing cabinets of university theatre departments. But the second box contained some less common scripts. The first to catch my eye was the three copies of Sandra Shotlander's 1995 feminist French history, *Chronicles of the French Revolution*. The correspondence address on the front, No. 17 (street redacted), was one door over from my former address of 21 (street redacted). It was not news to me that Sandra lived at this address. I had the pleasure of befriending her when I lived there. Memories came back to me of her persimmon tree and a discussion about William Blake. Memories that were entirely disconnected from whoever had placed these scripts here. This short circuit to my own memories brings back into focus a central issue in this endeavour: the subjective nature of this theatre archaeology. In triggering these memories, this object produced an affect in me, a *feeling,* experienced in a visceral, palpable way. The process of cleaning produced several affects, including the resentment that *I* had been left to pick up and sort through these pieces of other people's junk, which was physically and mentally obstructing my

work. However, there were other affects that became tangible to me, that seemed imbued into these objects.

Image 5: A stash of scripts in found hidden in the toilet cupboards. Image credit: Asher Warren.

The two large moving boxes mentioned earlier contained some objects that were imbued with affect. These boxes contained the effects of a former staff member in the theatre program, who had worked in the building, but had 'moved out' at least a decade before I had 'moved in'. One of these boxes contained books and teaching materials, but the other was full of much more personal items. This included exercise books full of handwritten notes from their undergraduate study at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, photographs, keepsakes, teaching evaluations, research plans, various administrative correspondences and a performance review. These little windows into another person's life seemed like an intrusion, and it made me uncomfortable. But I was also struck by this collection, and why it was left here. Did they pack these boxes themselves, with an intent to leave them here for others to sort through and find what might be useful? Or perhaps, they had left in a hurry, and these items boxed up by a successor? Unpacking these boxes raised a set of ethical considerations, some of which are unique to the challenges of performance research (see Warren 2022), and the reason certain details have been omitted in this account.

Looking at the dates on these documents, and against the context provided by University Annual Reports, it is possible to note this staff member was employed during a period

of substantial change. In 1998, an enterprise bargaining agreement was reached which included "the introduction of performance management in the institution" (UTAS Annual Report 1998), alongside a restructuring that condensed seven schools and fifty-one departments down to five faculties and thirty-four schools. In 1999, the visual arts and theatre departments in Launceston were drawn together into the School of Visual and Performing Arts, and work began to convert the old railway workshops into a new home for this school. In 2000, a new multi-disciplinary degree structure (the Bachelor of Contemporary Arts) was approved, bringing the visual and performing arts together as streams in the same degree (discontinued in 2018). In 2002, the Academy of the Arts and Annexe Theatre were opened. Even against contemporary standards, this restructuring, course development and relocation was rapid, and no doubt exhausting. Not long after the relocation, documents indicate that a period of leave was taken, from which the staff member did not return. I was struck by this parallel with our technical officer, who also did not return after an extended period of leave and had similarly left behind many professional and personal things. The overwhelming sense I had was that these staff had decided to make a clean break and walk away. While there are many explanations, one might speculate in both cases that periods of extensive institutional change may have been a factor.

These objects, and the larger scenario they suggest, have haunted me. But ghosts, of course, have long and rich theatrical connections. On the topic of theatrical remnants, Barbara Hodgdon writes: "If, as Marvin Carlson suggests, live performances are already embodied ghosts […] then the material remains surviving performance are ghosts ghosting ghosts—surrogates that come not as single spies but in battalions" (Hodgdon 2012, 375). In the same way, Diana Taylor suggests "[t]he scenario makes visible, yet again, what is already there: the ghosts, the images, the stereotypes" (Taylor 2003, 28). While I cannot attest to having seen spectres floating through The Annexe, I can say that all this stuff haunted the place. In *Ghostly Matters*, Avery Gordon theorises haunting as a model of sociological investigation, explaining:

> … haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition. (Gordon 2008, p. 8)

As Gordon notes, her project is indebted to Raymond Williams, and his sociological concept of 'structures of feeling' to examine individual experiences of culture. Just like structures of feeling, haunting operates at the edge of what Gordon calls the 'cold knowledge' of hard empirical findings and logical axioms, and as such require the development of "a critical language to describe and analyze the affective, historical and mnemonic structures" of hauntings (Gordon, 19). Throughout this essay, I have been attempting to develop such a language, drawing on Taylor's concept of the *scenario* as a structure *for* the feelings sensed and drawn out from (after Hodgdon) the *ghosts ghosting ghosts* in The Annexe Theatre.

Haunting, Gordon argues, is distinctive because "it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely" (xvi). It is no surprise that the objects I have found, tucked away out of sight because they have been 'too hard' to deal with might speak to unresolved social crises, turmoil or violence. Moreover, as Gordon points out, "these specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view" (xvi). These objects have emerged due to a confluence of factors: the shutdown of the building by COVID-19, large scale campus building projects, and the resignation of staff, and in emerging, have drawn me into an affective engagement with them, or as Gordon terms it, a 'transformative recognition'.

An Archaeological site or Archive?

While processing this junk has led me to frameworks of *scenarios* and *haunting,* there remains a question about whether these objects have been left here unintentionally, or more deliberately: is this an archaeology, or am I exploring an archive? In *THEATRE/ARCHAEOLOGY,* Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks connect their respective fields of performance making and archaeology as endeavours in subjective meaning making. As Shanks explains, "the archaeologist is implicated as an active agent of interpretation", noting that "different things can be made from the same traces and fragments. People may work on the same material and produce different outcomes" (Pearson and Shanks 2001, 11) If not already evident, this discussion stands as *my* reading of the traces, redolent with my own idiosyncrasies. The abandoned or forgotten things I've discussed so far have invited broad speculation. There are other objects, however, which seem to have been collected and kept in a more deliberate manner and betray an *archival* impulse.

Image 6: A collection of paperwork in the production office. Image credit: Asher Warren.

This brings us to another architectural quirk of The Annexe: a narrow space that extends from a corner of the production office, where a folio cabinet and several filing cabinets have been placed. Inside the drawers and archive boxes are many papers, tapes, and disks. In them, on them, and around them are a vexing collection of things, ranging from paper supplies in various colours, lighting plans (without dates or production details) architectural drawings of fire suppression systems, and a collection of posters and programs from past productions. One folio drawer contains 7 copies of the poster for *The Balcony* directed by Sean Coyle, 10 copies of a poster for *The Killing Game* directed by Helen Trenos, and 37 copies of a poster for *Ruff*, A Peggy Shaw solo performance co-presented by the University and Junction Arts Festival. All of which took place in 2015. This is not, however, a draw reserved for 2015, as it also includes posters from 2016, 2018 and 2019. Neither is it a drawer for posters, as it also contains sheets of blank paper and a handful of thank-you cards addressed to staff and signed by students. Labels, where they can be found, are often misleading, with many items simply placed where they would fit. There are multiple copies of things; class sets of photocopied handouts, piles of undistributed programs, and posters such as those spread across another two drawers, from the 2013 Centrstage season. Still in their brown paper wrapping from the printers, these decade old packets are a testament to the poster placing vigour of the directors involved: some packets quite full, others had only a few remaining.

There is a clear attempt to organise these objects into some kind of collection, but the logic of this collection constantly shifts. It feels overwhelmed, harried, and indecisive. It isn't clear if this is a storeroom of things needed at hand in the aid of production (materials, plans, publicity), or an attempt to archive things that have happened (old posters, keepsakes and documentation). Caught between the present, future, and the past. Just like the Random Access Memory, things are held, shifted around to make space as needed, then forgotten after the event. Unlike the digital memory, however, these traces do not disappear when the power goes out. Tom Burvil and Mark Seton describe a similar collection of boxes, stored in a tin shed in a suburb of Sydney, that held a wide range of documents from the Sidetrack Performance Group, which operated from 1979 to 2008. Burvil and Seton write:

> The large and rich collection of traces and fragments housed precariously in the Sidetrack shed may be at best called a 'not-yet' archive, waiting to become archival: not yet securely housed nor publicly accessible, not formally catalogued, not formally authorised nor interpreted. The Sidetrack collection falls into a broader idea of what constitutes an archive – what is necessary before a document collection can be called an archive and how archives are to be used – that can be understood in relation to memory and to history (Burvil and Seton 2011, 48-9).

There are a number of things in the 'not-yet' archives of this Annexe collection that will find their way to more formal archival, such as those documenting the history of the CentrStage company, a bijou theatre company that was run through the theatre program from 1990 until 2013 but established as a (nominally) separate entity. Yet the majority

of the documents are less cohesive; speaking to an ongoing rotation of students, staff, and a staggering number of annual productions. This collection also exemplifies the increasing demands of the university to make outcomes visible. As Reason, Richmond, Gray and Walker argue, "documentary and archival pressures within the academic institution have shifted the relationship between the work and the document, between arts practice and the arts archive" (2011, 149). The pressure to produce documentation as evidence of learning, teaching, and research has never been stronger; with metrics of impact and engagement reliant on these documents.

Impact and engagement may as well be synonyms for neoliberalism, insofar as they gesture to a sweeping global turn toward austerity, led through data-driven metrics and couched in the rationale of individualised (economic) empowerment. Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism is more than just economic policy, but in fact "a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes the human itself exclusively as homo economicus" (Brown 2015, 176). The consequence, Brown continues, is that "it formulates everything, everywhere, in terms of capital investment and appreciation, including and especially humans themselves" (176), with profound effects on higher education. In the Australian university sector, this change happened quickly, through the sweeping reforms of the 'Dawkins Revolution' of 1987-1994, which dramatically improved the accessibility of higher education, but also ushered in an era of corporate managerialism (Bessant 1995). Much recent scholarship has interrogated the neoliberal university, and offered strategies of resistance (two recent collections include Breeze, Taylor & Costa, 2019, and Solga, 2019), to which the junk in this essay, I argue, offers another perspective. As the material byproduct of the institutional imperatives of ever more productive austerity, this junk stands as testament to the inefficiencies, the lack of stewardship, and the extractive impulses of such a corporate approach. Every restructure, every requirement to demonstrate impact and engagement, and every quest for strategic alignment leaves in its wake a collection of things, which were quickly abandoned as the next frantic cycle begins.

In *Archive Fever* Derrida explores the etymology of the archive, from the Greek *arkheion*, that is, a house or residence of the *archons*, those with authority. As Derrida writes, "The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. […] They have the power to interpret the archives" (Derrida 1995, 10). Yet what happens when the old *archons* relinquish their post, and newcomers arrive? Do they bequeath a responsibility, and did they leave their house in order? However, to take this a step further, one might scrutinise the idea of this theatre as an *arkheion*, because this theatre is not a house unto itself; but part of the larger University. As such, it operates under the dictates of another set of *archons*. Within the hierarchy of the institution, technicians and academics answer to executive officers, business managers, operations managers and heads of school; who in turn answer to their superiors. And what if these *archons* live somewhere else? Since 2013 The Annexe ceased being locally managed in Launceston, when the School of Visual and Performing arts was restructured as part of a statewide College of the Arts, overseen by a Head of School based 200 kilometres away in Hobart. At least since I commenced in 2018, the school Executive Officer and Operations Manager have also been based in Hobart.

A more streamlined management structure has only increased the proliferation of things, which might be better understood as a series of unauthorised or ad-hoc collections; or as Glen McGillivray terms them, "hidden or illegitimate" archives (2008, 32). McGillivray draws attention to Benjamin Hutchens's use of the term *memorabilia*, as the "idiosyncratic collection founded on individual desire, and a somewhat less formal organisation of memory traces" that "become illegitimate signifiers of cultural memory" (37). This term seems apt, gesturing toward the way these objects rely so heavily on memory rather than documentation to give them value, and as such, estimations of their value fluctuate wildly. The idea of a fluid and partial archive is also proposed by Matthew Reason who speculates about an 'archive of detritus': the things left over in the immediate aftermath of a performance as "shaky and incomplete evidence of what happened … archives which display their own randomness and selectiveness, and that mirror the nature of the audience's memory of the production" (2003, 88). Reason argues this detritus abandons "presumptions of neutral detachment, objectivity, fidelity, consistency, and authenticity – instead claiming partiality, fluidity, randomness, and memory" (89). However, with audience and performance-makers gone, figuring these remnants as a 'third thing' they might contest is not particularly helpful. A third thing, in the absence of a first and second, simply becomes a thing again. McGillivray's suggestion of the term 'illegitimate' resonates with these orphaned things, cut off from inheriting even the contested accounts that Reason's 'archive of detritus' might offer.

Conclusion

What might be made from all this detritus, memorabilia, flotsam and junk? Overlooked or deliberately shifted out of view, and without the authority of an 'official' archive, they have found themselves receiving limited critical attention. In approaching these 'illegitimate collections' of things and interrogating them, I have been attempting to bring them a certain legitimacy. They offer another way of understanding a theatre; of filling in gaps in official archives, their materiality making tangible a set of scenarios distinct to a particular place and period. Assembling these scenarios together, I am aware they feel melancholic at best, and tragic at worst. The objects I have found and discussed are those that have been left behind: the objects too complicated, too messy, too hard, too awkward, too tragic. Not discussed are happier and more successful scenarios, which are in good supply. Their story is not told here simply because those scenarios do not haunt The Annexe.

There are three overlapping scenarios that I have drawn from this endeavour: of resourcefulness, of futurity, and of violence. The first of these, a culture of resourcefulness and problem solving, created the improvised tools like the extended crowbar, and reused materials, turning a Coca-Cola banner into a Union Jack. This scenario brings with it, however, tremendous amounts of labour and a habit of hoarding things in the event they may be useful for some unknown future production. This futurity is the hallmark of the second scenario, a particular temporal tension. Pulling in one direction are the objects best described as memorabilia, holding onto the past, be it through the piles of posters and prompt scripts, or hundreds of costumes no longer fit for purpose. Yet those costumes also pull in the other direction: not as things to

remember, but things to *continue*. The photocopied scripts and lesson plans also reach into the future but imagine that future in the same terms as the past: to simply continue doing things as they have been done. This projection of past practice into the future leads the third scenario, evident not only in the archived repertoire of 'classic plays', but enacted by the material remains of these productions. The props, costumes and weapons all speak to an ongoing mode of theatrical realism that seems reliant on material artifice, untrusting of the audience's capacity to suspend their disbelief, and the traces of an underlying obsession with violence.

These scenarios are not simply about a theatre, however, but about a *university* theatre. Indeed, many of the findings speak to social violences caused by the university as an institution. One must be resourceful to negotiate the unpredictable flows of funding into theatre programs; lurching from new theatres, filled with the latest equipment, to austerity budgets which necessitated set items being sourced off the side of a truck. The personal effects left behind only hint at what staff give of themselves to keep these programs going, and the unsustainability of working this way. The results, all too often, are sudden departures which leave no opportunity for handover. The demands on university staff have, since the turn of the millennium, undoubtedly become more complex and onerous, with time becoming more and more pressured. On this point, there is one last finding to include. It was an email that had been printed out, which I found while cleaning up the production office. It was from the school executive officer, written in 2013. The subject was 'Theatre WHS Inspection', and noted that upon recent inspection, overall housekeeping throughout the theatre was in urgent need of attention. This would be addressed, "firstly disposing of rubbish and all obviously unnecessary items" and then to "sort through remaining storage to identify what needs to be kept and what is being held on to unnecessarily". The Annexe, it would appear, had been haunted for some time already.

Initially, I was exasperated at the obvious failure to do the identified task over the decade since it was requested, and I had assigned blame to individuals who had not done their job. Cleaning up this mess, however, has led me to recognise that it is at least equally an institutional failure. For all the inspections, audits, assessments, metrics, annual plans and strategic visions, the more obvious work of stewardship was allowed to fall by the wayside. This relationship between The Annexe and the larger university institution is not unique. The diminishing or outright discontinuation of theatre programs at universities across Australia highlights the conflict between the one-size-fits-all, centralised administration adopted across the sector, and the distinct material realities of teaching and making theatre. Each time I am required to reiterate the reasons it would not be appropriate to install a permanent presentation lectern on the stage of The Annexe, I am reminded that a surprising number of my colleagues have very little understanding of how we work in these spaces.

It is not with gothic despair or neoliberal anguish that I wish to conclude this essay, but rather, with some sense of accomplishment. In the first, very real sense, this accomplishment is the completion of a task to clean up the theatre, and the pleasure of now being able to work unencumbered by junk. In the second sense, this project has

brought about a resolution of sorts. Gordon writes that haunting "alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future" (xvi), and this has been my experience, caught up in the eddy-currents of the past, held back from imagining and plotting out possible futures. My dive through these affects and scenarios has led to a thickening relationship with this past, and to my own role as a current steward of the building, that connects past, present and future. While haunting, Gordon argues, is indicative of social violence, it is also "distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done" (xvi). In this case, physically cleaning up has given me an affective experience of history, and an opportunity to examine, with some critical tools, an aspect of theatrical remnants that are often overlooked. In doing so, this essay has offered another way of engaging with the *mess* that university theatres make, uncovering scenarios of resourcefulness, futurity and violence. Evoking these scenarios are, hopefully, another step to changing the structures, cultures and processes that led to their creation.

In the spirit of tidying up, I might note that most of the objects I have written about have been disposed of, shredded, recycled, or re-purposed. Writing these objects and their scenarios offers one way to archive them, which I hope speaks to their complicated contexts. I have kept one stick of RAM as memorabilia of this process and have begun planning a performative sorting of all the remaining documents in the production office. We have been refining our pedagogy and production process to make our work more sustainable, and prioritising re-use and recycling. As a final scenario, however, I want to conclude with a revisionist re-reading of the names written by past students in the dust collected up amongst the lighting bars. Instead of a territorial inscription, I wish to read these writings as small acts of stewardship: cleaning a small part of the space as a personal contribution to ongoing work to keep the theatre running—of making their mark—and then handing over to those who are to come.

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