

The Body and the Counter-Archive

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This presentation will offer some reflections on the work of Berlin-based queer artist Henrik Olesen (Danish, born 1967). Specifically, it will focus on the artist's ongoing "box" sculpture series. These works formally and discursively fuse Donald Judd's specific objects, Helio Oiticica's *Bólides*, Warholian silkscreen processes, image of sadomasochism, "aberrant" sexuality, and the work of French philosophers Michel Foucault and George Bataille.

I contend that Olesen's work is a destabilization of the archive. By trawling the archives of modern and postmodern art, literature, and philosophy, Olesen summons particular figures and movements as a means of throwing their archival instability into sharp relief. He stresses that these discourses should hardly be considered secure, much less foreclosed. Thus, his work is a *counter-archive*, an oppositional critique that seeks to account for the archive's inadequacies: its purported impartiality, its limits on the articulation of knowledge, and the heteronormative standpoint from which it has historically been formulated. As an act of resistance, the counter-archive is a proposal for the establishment of new forms and modes of behavior that work against the hegemonic, positivist aspects of the archive's effect on society.

As scholars Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook have argued, "control of the archive – variously defined – means control of society and thus control of determining history's winners and losers."

Thomas Duncan is a Los Angeles-based writer and curator. He is currently a PhD student in the Department of Art History at UCLA where he studies modern and contemporary art. His research focuses primarily on the effect photographic frameworks have on collective memory and identity formation. He has published essays and reviews on artists such as Richard Hawkins, Mark Bradford, and Josh Tonsfeldt in *Flash Art*, *Mousse*, and *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles*. Prior to graduate study, he curated numerous exhibitions within commercial and institutional realms including Gagosian, New York; Campoli Presti, Paris and London; and Bergen Kunsthall, Norway. From 2011-2016 he owned and operated his eponymous gallery in Los Angeles.