

The Act of Mislacing

Katie Paine's work seeks to represent fissures in time as occurring within the context of Western archival practices. She approaches this concern through pictures, texts and narratives that embody the slippages that take place when one attempts to capture a moment in time. Her new exhibition *Future Devonian Archive* is comprised of such attempts, bringing together a number of assemblages where photographs are juxtaposed, re-drawn and collaged in order to reveal instances of a-synchronicity. Although her source material is drawn from multiple sources and is eclectic in form, references to the body are constant throughout. In fact, the works in the exhibition often incorporate x-rays of her own body and detritus from her father's records as a medical practitioner along with fragments of fictional narratives. This approach is becoming characteristic of Paine's practice, whose work often displays a bizarre melding of autobiography, fiction, appropriation, time and the body.

These interests find an intersection in the archive, and she seems sensitive to the banal errors that may undermine the latter, such as the misplacement of a document or the circulation of a bad copy. In fact, Paine often appears to provoke these errors herself by juxtaposing, remediating and collaging multiple images and texts. For instance, her work *Private Geohistory Slips* consists of a distorted cityscape stylized by waves that resemble heavy forms of chromatic aberration. This visual effect is achieved by scanning an image at high resolution and repositioning it while the scan is still in progress. The resultant sludge of colour documents the act of two objects falling out of synch with each other while also degrading the legibility of the image. The artist extends this process and its signification by juxtaposing the print with an amorphous drawing, an image of a ruin and the artist's personal x-ray. This assemblage re-encodes the cluster of found material with an open and chaotic quality akin to a series of metronomes ticking at different tempos. The x-ray, which is arguably the most loaded object in the group, occupies a telling space within this wave of visual noise. Indeed, unlike the rest of the images appropriated in *Private Geohistory Slips*, the x-ray is in actual usage and circulation as it belongs to the artist's medical history. Yet, she has still chosen to wildly misplace it in order to recompose its textuality.

In conversation with Paine, she explains how her impulses run counter to those of an archivist, as she often finds herself neglecting her personal archive. Perhaps her work is a reflection of the misplacements that she naturally commits while dealing with her personal records. Either way, one can easily observe how Paine finds greater meaning in degeneration than in preservation. In her studio, time seems to emerge as a fleeting force that escapes every attempt to contain it, as pictures, objects, and texts continuously appear to fall out of synch with the histories that they seek to document. *Future Devonian Archive* often divorces form from meaning and sets up pictorial sequences that lead to obfuscate texts. Unlike a typical archivist, Katie Paine seeks to widen the perceptual distance between the reader and the text. In some respects, her new archive asks the question of what happens when an x-ray is filed in the wrong cabinet. Or as she notes, two different kinds of paper are accidentally pressed against each other in a museum, leading to a chemical reaction that provokes the accelerated aging of both. It would seem that with the passage of time, a simple oversight could reveal irreparable consequences.

Diego Ramirez is an artist and writer based in Melbourne