

## IN SEARCH OF LOST DISARRAY

Fail clumsily, but fail anyway

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Translated by George Hutton

**1:** As Michel Foucault says, I believe in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, but I'm not completely sure about it, the placid sleep of reason will keep producing monsters. Monsters that are the result of domestication, of conformism and of the security guaranteed by the exerting of power. The mechanisms of power no longer have death as their object, but rather they will act as administrators of life, and will therefore produce an endless campaign aimed at disciplining thousands, millions of 'dangerous' individuals, the monsters, the hopeless, the onanists... The monster, with all its tentacles, is, essentially, the necessary casuistry that the disarray of nature demands in law and in all institutions, which are necessary for their 'channelling' but also for their 'success', in terms that range from the family, the prison and the factory, to the archive and the museum.

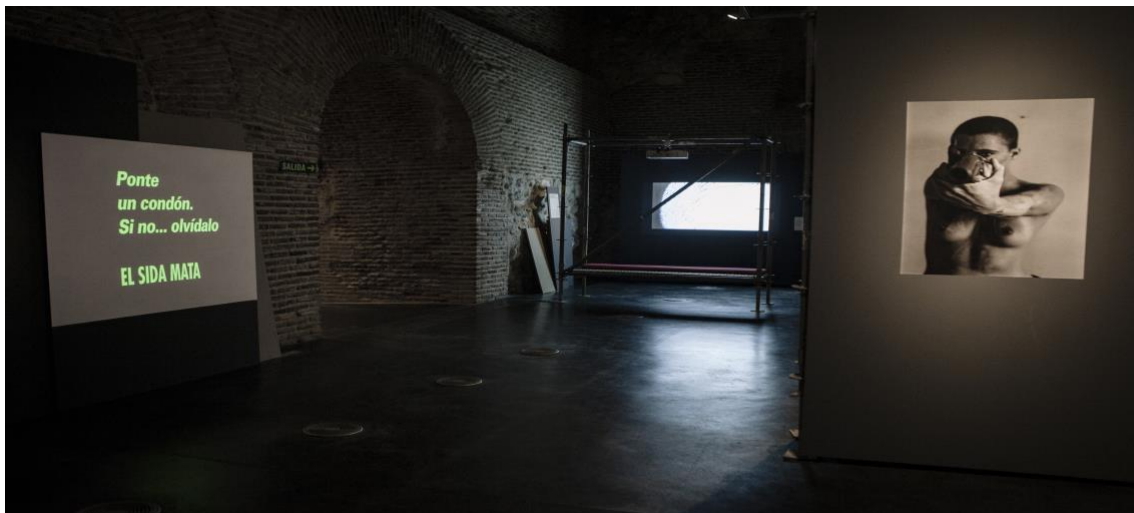


Photograph by Xaime Fandiño of the exhibition titled *¿Archivo queer?. Imaginarios de acción y placer*. Madrid 1989-1999 ('Queer Archive? Imageries of Action and Pleasure. Madrid 1989-1999') which took place in Madrid at the Conde Duque Cultural Centre, as one of the artistic activities of the programme *El porvenir de la revuelta. Memoria y deseo LGBTIQ* ('The Future of Revolt. LGBTIQ Memory and Desire'), held in 2017.

**2:** As Paul B. Preciado says, I cannot remember exactly where and I quote from memory, "collectively, we are the effect of the systematic erasure of the body's subaltern knowledge". If the archive has been established historically as a mediation of order and privilege between body and mind,

between History and history, between the legible and the indecipherable, in short, between memory and power, it now becomes necessary to not only exercise oneself in the dismantling of the authority that selects and excludes. If the task of the archive has aimed at establishing that which is worthy of being conserved, in other words, that which talks to us precisely, without babbling or mumbling; the action of a counter-archive would thus consist not only of searching for the traces that have been swept away by this established order, but its task would also be to give an account of a lost disarray: of the sounds that are spoken between walls, of the shadows of images that appear and disappear in the cracks of time, of the intermittent moments of emotional anguish or physical pain, of the fits of rage and laughter that destabilize the subject and the predicate. Signs of trauma or pleasure, that account for the existence of abnormal.

**3:** As my mother says, nothing's how it used to be. And it's not because you're hopeless, which you are, she tells me, but because now it's all a bit hopeless, you just don't come across good feelings anymore... This. There's no way out of this.



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**4:** As La Radical Gai used to say, as in their slogan *Cuerpos insumisos atados al placer* ('Rebellious bodies tied up to pleasure'), we had intentions: to apply pressure on that which we understand as an archive, opening up the possibility to think about the role of the body, and of its contacts, in the passing on of experience and knowledge. Of friendship.

Affects, feelings, and their manifestations as concealment and shame, pride and rage, indignation, rebellion, happiness, mourning, pleasure, sexuality,

fraternity, sexual practices, fragility, strength and bravery... enjoyment. Fundamental aspects in the activism of LSD and La Radical Gai.

This emotional and radically body-focused shift, as activated by queer activism, allows for the integration of the conflict or interdependence of its militants; the rationality and the irrationality in our movements of protest and vindication. The pleasures and dangers that come from using our bodies not only as battlefields but also as artefacts that alter the material and symbolic order... pushing for another social becoming.

In the early nineties, the collectives La Radical Gai and LSD were highly critical of the short-term, 'handout' policies of the main LGTB groups, and they expressed their practices through their fanzines *De un plumazo* and *Non Grata*, as well as posters, actions and pamphlets. In 1993, the queer group LSD present the photographic series *Es-cultura lesbiana* in the bar La Lupe, in the Madrid neighbourhood of Lavapiés, as part of a campaign for dyke action and visibility. In the texts *De la necesidad de una acción lesbiana* ('On the need for lesbian activism') and *De la necesidad de un imaginario lesbiano* ('On the need for a shared lesbian imagination') (*Non-Grata*, 1994), they question why lesbians are so underrepresented.

The photographic images *Queerpos que mutan*, *Es-cultura lesbiana* and *Sub-jetas* respond to this underrepresentation. The photographs, with a clear performative base, show desire and sexuality between women, openly and unashamedly. They are daring and beautiful images, in which genitals, shaved heads and military boots are at the fore, something "completely unprecedented in the Spanish context". With these images, they aimed to "self-identify based on the perversion and dissidence that is entailed in making our bodies visible, in showing us turned on, wet, fingered, breathless... because only using our own body can we exist, can we be lesbians" (LSD, 1994).



Photograph by Xaime Fandiño of the exhibition titled *¿Archivo queer?. Imaginarios de acción y placer. Madrid 1989-1999* ('Queer Archive? Imageries of Action and Pleasure. Madrid 1989-1999') which took place in Madrid at the Conde Duque Cultural Centre, as one of the artistic activities of the programme *El porvenir de la revuelta. Memoria y deseo LGBTIQ* ('The Future of Revolt. LGBTIQ Memory and Desire'), held in 2017.

**5:** As Ann Cvetkovich says, in this wonderful book of hers, which is in front of me right now, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*, the Spanish version of which has been translated with passion and rigour by Javier Sáez and published recently by Ediciones Bellaterra, "performances by bands like Le Tigre and Tribe 8 have been my inspiration here and form the archive in which my own feelings are deposited. Sometimes the most effective way I can explain my project is to point to work like theirs because it articulates better than I can what I want to say". Cvetkovich comes to show us that identifying and producing archives, those that allow us to create the stories we need today in order to give an account on queer subcultures, entails activating feelings that are not very (or not at all) orthodox, and then depositing them in somewhat strange places. In this case, the author identifies two of the most guerrilla-girrrrrl-style punk bands of the 90s, and she articulates her own memory based on them, as well as converting trauma or stigma into a political stance for combat and social transformation, fostering thus her own personal resistance and our collective struggles, constructing worlds with another woman, with other women, with others.

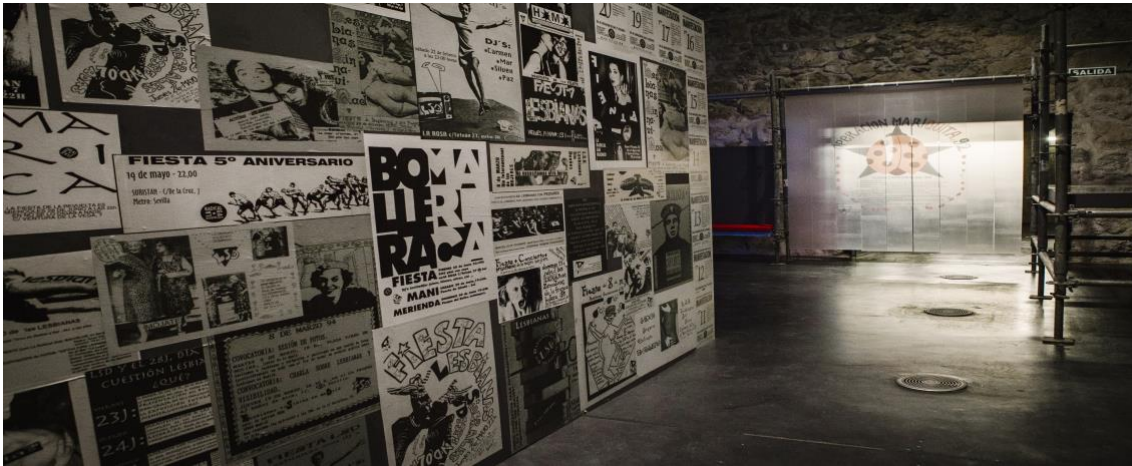




Photograph by Andrés Senra – La Radical Gai, as part of the *¿Archivo Queer?* managed by the Reina Sofía Museum, and which was included in the exhibition titled *¿Archivo queer?. Imaginarios de acción y placer. Madrid 1989-1999* ('Queer Archive? Imagineries of Action and Pleasure. Madrid 1989-1999') which took place in Madrid at the Conde Duque Cultural Centre, as one of the artistic activities of the programme *El porvenir de la revuelta. Memoria y deseo LGBTIQ* ('The Future of Revolt. LGBTIQ Memory and Desire'), held in 2017.

**6:** As I myself have said somewhere, museums, as with archives, are a kind of memory-container that store the same rules that they reproduce and that have created them. In this sense, the *¿Archivo Queer?*, which is physically situated in the Reina Sofía National Museum and Art Centre in Madrid, has attempted to challenge, paradoxically, the archive's own rules; from the outset it interrogates the archive and therefore the very methodology in order to construct, collectively, the framework onto which our most recent history is attached. When we created this archive of sexual dissidence, which accounts for a different kind of story within the institution itself and its own hegemonic history, as a machine for producing knowledge and power and also the normalisation of subjectivity, an excluding inclusion is created, a paradox that strains the machine and also speaks of our positions as permanently negotiated and situated, while also being vulnerable and resistant.

In a somewhat ironic way, the existence of the *¿Archivo Queer?* elevates the institution, this museum-device of contemporary art, to a new level of popular and political visibility. This takes place with a certain degree of covering-up, given that, if indeed the museum is an apparatus for the legitimising of our queer declarations, this presence, ever marginal and biased, constitutes in itself a certain misappropriation or resistance, which happens when we pit the museum against its own political pedigree, against the device that is deployed in its producing subjectivities and established orders and hierarchies.



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7:

Smash into smithereens

a window

Interrupt, the rhythm, the pace, the

breathing

Steal what you've already got

Stumble as you run away

smash and crash into the

door

It was so fragile

Deafening

the sound of something breaking

the state

sex  
gender

Fail clumsily

but fail anyway

just fail

Disarray

Commotion

Joy

**8:** As my daughter says: mum, are they paying you for this article?  
Well if they're not paying you, then why are you doing it?