

THE ALTERNATIVE DOCUMENT

Exhibition / Text / Publication
A Bartram O'Neill project

Beyond most ephemeral artwork a memory remains in the mind of the observer and this forms part of the legacy of the fleeting event. However, memory is mostly a personal experience, that shifts, mutates, and fades over time to become distant, different to its origin, and in this way its archival potential is unreliable. To overcome this dilemma a variety of lens-based archival methods have become the tradition of recording the 'actual' event in as far as it is possible. Although a recorder, of any variation, can provide footage that gives place and context of the archive document, they present a dilemma – how much do they indicate what it was like to 'be there'. For recordings are mediated and translated for posterity through the direction of the person holding the device and document their viewpoint and subjective encounter with the work. This creates an archival document open to subjective discussion, as a memorial and work in its own right, and of which alternatives are often sought. It is in this way that the disciplinary ghettos of event and documentation are abandoned in favour of a mode of practice that allows for a greater level of mutual critique. For documentation is also subject to the same vagaries of time as the event itself.

Concerned with the ephemeral and how it is perceived Peggy Phelan represents a position on this subject of "you have to be there" in order to understand the ephemeral. Phelan acknowledges that a performance "become[s] itself through disappearance." This argument draws empathy, but in practice is a less than pragmatic account of the reality of experiencing ephemeral works, for how is the work to exist beyond the moment if not recorded in some way. The symposium seeks to expand on the idea of ephemeral and its loss, and by offering a platform where alternative acts of legacy can be discussed.

Hosted by the University of Lincoln the conference will take place in Lincoln Performing Arts Centre on the 13th February 2016. It will run in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the university's gallery Project Space Plus, which will open on 12th February 2016.