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## ARTICLE

# THE ARCHIVE AND ATELIER, ALMOST A HENDIADYS

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“Je verrai l’atelier qui chante et qui bavarde.”

Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857)

## CROSSED DESTINIES

“If I put ‘atelier’ in quotation marks, it is because instead of an atelier, it was, on rue La Boétie, a four or five-room apartment transformed into a shambles. The rooms, each with its fireplace surmounted by a mirror, were empty of furniture, but filled with piled-up paintings, reams of paper, heaps of books, packages, and bundles containing molds of sculptures, placed randomly on the floor and covered with a thick layer of dust,”<sup>1</sup> thus the eye of Paris, Brassai, in 1932 - sent by Teriade for a photographic reportage for the magazine *Minotaure* - describes his visit to Picasso’s atelier in rue La Boétie. A still image, suggested by Brassai’s prehensile and curious gaze, which frames Picasso’s studio, characterised by the disorder and chaos of a factory, by the absence of furnishings and by the vitalism of an existence nourished by an absolute and obsessive dedication, whose only measure is that of the work and of time that indiscriminately chase each other in an unstoppable accumulation, of which dust is both symptom and result. The Brassai’s observations reported from the meeting with Picasso’s atelier are part of a consolidated iconographic tradition, which, to remain exclusively in the French domain, finds a clear visual model in Gustave Courbet’s *L’Atelier du peintre*<sup>2</sup> (1855) and in the enigmatic pages that Balzac dedicates to the shadowy study of the protagonist of *Le Chef-d’œuvre inconnu* (1831). Brassai’s observations also have

the strength of capturing in that disorderly accumulation, a trace, in some way a principle that is produced in a list: piled up paintings, reams of paper, stacks of books, packages, bundles, molds of sculptures. This list certainly includes a small number of objects, those that Brassai managed to see while moving in the magmatic environment of the studio, but which already implies the construction of a taxonomy and therefore of a catalogue. Reflecting on these topics, Umberto Eco spoke of *Vertigine della lista* (2009) - according to a brilliant definition coined during a conference at the Musée du Louvre held in 2009 - proposing the list as a constitutive act, practice and model of any collection, of which he finds proof "in the history of literature, full of obsessive collections of objects."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Eco observes that "lists represent in their own way a form because they confer unity to a set of objects that, however dissimilar from each other, obey a *contextual pressure*, or are related by being all expected in the same place, or by constituting the aim of a certain project."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the place and the project, or rather the artist's atelier and research, make the list of things that occupy the rooms inhabited by Picasso congruent, lay the foundations for a gradual inventory process, in fact, trace and designate the perimeter of an archive. The knot that binds atelier and archive - as a result of a "contextual pressure", as Eco asserts - is an intense relationship, if not even a substantial coincidence between two places that are at the same time devices for production and conservation, proliferation and selection, marked by the rules of order and chaos. If the atelier is, in the words of archival theorist Concetta Damiani, "the first of the many contexts of which the artist is a part: a place of work, of reflection, of inspiration or estrangement, permeated by his presence, a candidate to represent a lasting projection and self-portrait,"<sup>5</sup> the archive, understood as accumulation and organization, but even more as a mechanism of incessant mobilization of meanings, is simultaneously its beginning and end. Thus the archive is a place of beginning - Derrida recalled tracing its anatomy and recalling how in the act of archiving there is a sense of origin, which feeds and grows in the porous perimeter of the atelier<sup>6</sup> - but at the same time it is an inescapable source, a driving force of the practices that take place in it, as the artist Loris Cecchini observed: "in the studio you often see prototypes, ideas, and the artists' studio is always a sort of wonderful cave, you find the suggestions that often generate the works or entire archives of research on a work in formation."<sup>7</sup>

## OUTSIDE AND INSIDE: POETICS OF SPACE

Marked by the knot that binds order and chaos, the artist's atelier and archive are therefore two spaces that constitute a fascinating and indivisible conceptual unity, a *machines à penser* with variable boundaries and an evanescent perimeter, always characterized by a dialectic of outside and inside like any inhabited space. Gaston Bachelard writes: "Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has the sharpness of the dialectics of yes and no, which decides

everything.”<sup>8</sup> And it is on this dialectical thread that the intricate spatial relationship between atelier, archive and outside also takes place. The atelier, in its many architectural forms, is a closed space, “a space of life and creation, an archive full of matter and thought, a laboratory and an exclusive showcase, a secret place of privileged intimacy and close negotiations”, but prospectively open “for those who think of the history of art as an interrogation not only of the work, of its meanings and of its reception between collecting and exhibition, of the different conditions, of the plural relationships that have from time to time-oriented its production,”<sup>9</sup> as museologist and art critic Stefania Zuliani said. Thus the atelier finds itself at the centre of the strategies of art, open to the trajectories of the contemporary art system, continually oscillating from space for the making of the work - of a work that offers itself as a total work of art<sup>10</sup> - to institutional space of meeting for the artist and the figures of art, to the point of even being the setting for the exhibition and presentation of the work, as evidenced by the multiplication of occasions that see the studio open to the public. The atelier has a long itinerary, which in the twentieth century - as art theorist Angelo Trimarco recalled - also sought and found “in the museum, between conservation, eternity and museumisation, its natural destination.”<sup>11</sup> The artist’s studio, opens up to the world, involves the spectator and questions the idea of the work; it becomes a work itself through the procedures of exhibition, sometimes of museumisation, to which it is subjected. Capturing the ideological component of this process, art critic and writer Brian O’Doherty pointed out, in the transition phase between modern and postmodern, how the atelier is: “The space in which the artist thinks is thus a thinking space, a double enclosure, reciprocal, self-referential, compressed, the round skull in the studio box. This doubleness enhances the rhetoric of both the artist and the studio in a shimmer of signs and synecdoches: the studio stands for the art, the artist’s implements for the artist, the artist for the process, the product for the artist, the artist for the studio.”<sup>12</sup> But the dialectic of inside-outside - suggested by Bachelard as a reflection and consequence of the projection of intimate spaces onto the outside - is equally active in the archive device, which is an organized accumulation that challenges disorder in the confines of a room by drawing up inventories and building filing cabinets and then finds form and meaning in its public display, returning a project that, as museologist Adalgisa Lugli observed, “the clearer and more defined it is, the more the image of the whole will emerge.”<sup>13</sup> This perspective revitalizes the archive, removes it from inertia and silence, reopening it to the breath of life and the contamination of the external environment. This setting in space overturns the usual logic, in fact, it does not consider “the archive as a reservoir that provides materials, information or data to be exhibited, but rather considers the archive itself as an exhibitable object, offered to an experience of enjoyment and sharing with the public,”<sup>14</sup> as art historian Francesca Castellani observed. Moreover, this extroversion of the artist’s archive can be found in the most recent curatorial practices, which account for the “active life” and “continuous evolution”<sup>15</sup> of archival materials in exhibitions, also based on the lesson of historian and art critic

Germano Celant who had made the archive the driving force of curating.<sup>16</sup> This aspect finds confirmation in the recent observations of art critic Ilaria Bernardi who reads the archive as an exhibition to be ordered: "Cataloguing all the works of an artist means virtually bringing them back to the same place. In a sort of impossible all-encompassing exhibition, capable of revealing with greater evidence on their relationships of affinity and consequentiality."<sup>17</sup>

## TRACES OF A CULTURAL FUNCTION

Observing the complex interplay of openings and closings, distances and contiguities, transparency and opacity, that distinguish the atelier and the archive, the philosopher Maurizio Vitta reveals "not only the continuous coming and going between the outside and the inside that characterize inhabiting a place, but also the relationships of distance, the possibilities of access, the criteria of visibility,"<sup>18</sup> aspects that decree their functioning and orient their destination. Thus, after the radical transformations that affected the atelier in the transition between the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde<sup>19</sup> - the references to experiences such as that of Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* and Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise* that overturned the meaning and form of the artist's studio are unavoidable -, a renewed attention to the artist's creative space asserts itself between the 1970s and 1980s with works that from different perspectives bring into focus the strategies about the atelier. From the wide-ranging surveys of Francis Kelly, *The Studio and the Artist* (1974) and of Jeannine Baticle and Pierre Georgel, *Technique de la peinture - L'atelier* (1976), to the research of Michael Peppiatt, *Imagination's chamber: artists and their studios* (1982) and Eduard Hüttinger, *Kunstler Hauser: von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart* (1985), the transformations of the atelier have been the subject of reinterpretations that highlight its centrality in the art system and in particular the artists start to reflect on the functions of the studio. This is the case, for example, of Daniel Buren who, in a seminal essay of 1971, notes "the primary importance of the artist's studio,"<sup>20</sup> and proposes a first taxonomy of the different forms of atelier, suggesting a distinction between Europe and the USA. But Buren's reflection highlights above all how "the studio is a place of multiple activities: production, storage, and finally if all goes well, distribution,"<sup>21</sup> among which the function of *storage*<sup>22</sup> stands out in particular. Questioning the hegemony of the institutional art system, Buren "identifies in the studio itself a crucial, and in many ways opaque, element within the exhibition system" and insists "on the traumatic passage that the work experiences when it is taken from the context in which it was born - and which inevitably conditions its meaning - to another (private collection, gallery, museum), where the conditions of signification are different, unforeseen,"<sup>23</sup> as Stefania Zuliani reflected. So for Buren, the atelier is the place of verification of a process that matures between the artist's action and his traces, his mobile and unstoppable archive: "In the studio, we generally find finished work, work in progress, abandoned work, sketches - a collection of visible evidence viewed simultaneously that allows

an understanding of the process.”<sup>24</sup> This process has its own precise time - “the studio time”, as O’Doherty observed - “defined by this mobile cluster of tenses, quotas of past embodied in completed works, some abandoned, others waiting for resurrection, at least one in process occupying a nervous present, through which future plunges into past, a future exerting on the present the pressure of unborn ideas.”<sup>25</sup> The atelier is therefore a space of aggregation and sedimentation, nourished by different temporalities, which find their most effective convergence precisely in the form of the archive. This space-time hypothesis finds support in the discourse that Michel Foucault - in the same years in which Buren was investigating the functions of the artist’s studio - dedicated to the development of the methodological presuppositions that govern the archive, a device that like the atelier “captures those who contribute to building it.”<sup>26</sup> Foucault, in the volume *L’Archéologie du savoir* (1969), reflects on the history of culture and the processes of production of the statements that make up a disciplinary field and he observes that “the archive is the system of its functioning” and explains that “the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together following multiple relations, maintained or blurred by specific regularities.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, for Foucault the archive is understood first and foremost as a process of relations, a system of production of meanings that make different times react, so “between tradition and oblivion, it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the general system of the formation and transformation of statements.”<sup>28</sup> At the start of the new millennium Hal Foster, with Foucaultian tools, in the essay, *An Archival Impulse* (2004), repropose the figuration of the archive as a practice of contemporary art, as a system to be understood not exclusively as a database, but as “recalcitrant material, fragmentary rather than fungible, and as such they call out for human interpretation.”<sup>29</sup> This proposal intercepting the work of a constellation of artists, has positioned the functions of the archive with renewed interest in the trajectories of art, thus contributing to joining the modalities of this practice with the space of its experimentation, as also the reflection of Thomas Hirschhorn highlighted: “laboratory, storage, studio space [...], I want to use these forms in my work to make spaces for the movement and endlessness of thinking.”<sup>30</sup>

## PLACES OF A PRACTICE

The atelier and the archive therefore experience a more evident hybridization at the start of the new millennium that marks their spatial and conceptual affinities, but above all highlights the osmosis that characterizes the artistic practices that are carried out in them. These places are characterized by thinking and classifying, that return mental maps and itineraries of thought—a map has a lot to do with archives, Hans Ulrich Obrist<sup>31</sup> pointed out—, that follow the phases of work, in some

way prepare and clear the field, reflect the setbacks and accelerations, determining a continuous transformation of the work program. "Aligning, classifying, putting things in order are rarely done by chance,"<sup>32</sup> French writer Georges Perec observed, reflecting on the trajectories that determine the spatial organization of his desk, a micro example of the atelier that also turns out to be a mobile archive whose perimeter is impossible to trace. In this space, combinatorial and cataloguing practices reflect the phases of construction of the work, a refined game of mirrors that translates "a certain history of my tastes (their permanence, their evolution, their phases). More precisely, it will be, once again, a way of marking out my space, a somewhat oblique approach to my daily practice, a way of talking about my work, my history, my preoccupations, an attempt to grasp something on my experience, not at the level of its remote reflections, but at the very point where it emerges."<sup>33</sup> The atelier-archive, therefore, is also understood as a space for a self-portrait, the place of forms of subjectivation that opens from "oblique" perspectives to daily work practices and the field of projects. Perec himself did not fail to point out this aspect, finding together the archive, the atelier and the self-portrait, describing in the volume *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* the painting of Saint Jerome in his study (1474) by Antonello da Messina, a splendid iconographic metaphor that knots the entire space around the piece of furniture that constitutes the study, "and the whole of the piece of furniture is organized around the book."<sup>34</sup> It is then necessary to understand the atelier together with the archive, for which Foucault's suggestions are valid, not only as a physical space with its own geometry that varies in form and time, but as the manifestation of a practice, as a device that must be "interpreted and not only described and narrated, or rather made into a 'cultural' object in an idea of culture that brings into play material culture but also the history of ideas and even of intentions and impulses,"<sup>35</sup> as art critic Elio Grazioli said. On the basis of the reflection of Hal Foster (2005) and in general as a reflection of what a decisive exhibition, curated by Okwui Enwezor at the Center of Photography in New York in 2005, defined *Archive Fever*, art historian Cristina Baldacci in more recent years has attempted to trace cartography of the archival obsession of contemporary art in the book *Archivi impossibili. Un'ossessione dell'arte contemporanea* (2016).<sup>36</sup> This mapping traces a horizon that "leads from theory to practice and vice versa,"<sup>37</sup> but above all questions "what forms the archive can take,"<sup>38</sup> identifying among the possible artistic declinations a curvature that passes "from the atlas-map to the album-diary, from the museum-Wunderkammer to the filing cabinet-database,"<sup>39</sup> figurations of which the atelier appears as a double mirror, showing itself at the same time as content and container. In the context of art, Baldacci identifies three forms of archives - anarchives, anti-archives and counter-archives - that constitute three projections of artistic research, but also itineraries of a combinatorial practice that make the artist a *bricoleur*, as anthropologist Lévi-Strauss hypothesized, who finds in the orderly confusion of the atelier a precious hunting reserve.<sup>40</sup> So if, as literary theorist Aleida Assmann wrote, contemporary artists have nothing left "to reconstruct, all they can do is collect, safeguard, arrange and preserve whatever



remains of the scattered relics, save their traces, order them and conserve them,"<sup>41</sup> the archive-atelier is one of the brightest emblems of a condition and a practice that effectively embodies the transition that art is making in this first quarter of the new millennium. In an unstoppable circularity, the walls (material or immaterial) of the atelier offer hospitality to the archival obsession, to the collecting that feeds the artist's gaze and lights the fuse of the work; the archive incessantly nourishes artistic practice and defines the shape of the space, the geography of the atelier.

## NOTES FOR THREE ARTIST HYPOTHESES

If the research of a complex galaxy of artists between the twentieth century and beyond the year 2000 speaks to us of the vital intertwining between archive and atelier, for the Italian space the hypotheses generated by the figures of Hermann Nitsch, Vincenzo Agnetti and Giulio Paolini appear particularly interesting. These are three artists who, with different forms and methods, have worked on the convergence and unity between creative space and archive, developing proposals and suggesting paths of investigation that tighten theory and practice, but above all offering traces of these itineraries in spaces that combine the indissoluble conceptual union suggested by Brian O'Doherty between work, studio and archive. A synaesthetic conception fuels the Hermann Nitsch Archive Laboratory Museum for Contemporary Arts in Naples which, born in 2008 from the meeting between the gallery owner Peppe Morra and Hermann Nitsch, proposes knotted archive and project room, atelier and laboratory, in the spaces of a former power plant.<sup>42</sup> Imagining the form of the museum-archive as the concretization of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Nitsch has built a device that displays the assemblage of the relics of his *Aktion* (see Fig. 1) in all its expositive energy, but at the same time he has reasoned and reflected on this space as a device of creation and not only of conservation, or as an open workshop nourished by the happy coincidence between artist and art audience, the space of a, in the words of art critic Achille Bonito Oliva, "participated adventure that does not want to reduce the audience to a simple voyeur."<sup>43</sup> A plural and transmedial vision of the archive that hosts works and objects, materials and documents, data and information, exposes itself to a systematic rewriting—of which the artist himself until 2022, the year of his death, is the absolute protagonist—becoming an antithesis of the temple museum.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, however, the Neapolitan rooms of the Nitsch Museum present themselves as a productive laboratory, intended as a living organism due to a fruitful coexistence between production and exhibition, an atelier full of matter and thought (see Fig. 2). A hypothesis that with reasoned balance calibrates the archive and the atelier in the museum form, offering confirmation of the transits of artistic practice through the exhibition of residual materials from performances: from tools to the relics of actions, from liquid colors to basins, from spatulas to brushes, used to create large canvases. This great perceptive montage, accompanied by the intense smell of turpentine—quintessence of the artist's atelier—and that exhaled by large





**Figure 1.**  
Nitsch Museum Exhibition 2024-2026  
*50 years of friendship 1974-2024.*  
Photo by Amedeo Benestante.  
Courtesy of Fondazione Morra, Napoli.



**Figure 2.**  
Nitsch Museum Exhibition 2024-2026  
*50 years of friendship 1974-2024.*  
Photo by Amedeo Benestante.  
Courtesy of Fondazione Morra, Napoli.

vases of rotting flowers, which translates the total and synaesthetic dimension sought by Nitsch, but are also the living metaphor that unites atelier and archive: “the stench, the smell of rot and putrefaction, is testimony to the eternal movement, the transformation of the world, the Dionysian transformation, the fermentation, the return, the resurrection. In dissolution lies the germ of the return.”<sup>45</sup>

From a completely different point of view, due to a refined conceptual and theoretical elaboration, the encounter between archive and atelier in the poetics of Giulio Paolini takes the luminous form of the reflection that the artist has long dedicated to the space of the studio as a place of construction of the work,

constantly suspended between real and virtual dimensions, between architecture and thought.<sup>46</sup> Since the 1960s, Paolini has analysed the functions and exhibitions trajectories, as the title of one of his exhibitions, *De l'atelier a l'exposition*<sup>47</sup> at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nantes in 1987, tells us, but above all he has identified in the space of the studio the metaphor that opens and closes the constitution of the work, always nourished by the archive of images of the art history. The atelier is the place of epiphany, but also the center of self-reflexive discourse, as emblematically stated in the work *Synopsis* (1998) (see Fig. 3 and 4), a diptych with two photographs in the field and reverse field of the artist's studio, which reveals the conceptual origin and the archival form of the rooms inhabited by Paolini. What is laid out in these visual clippings, as Italo Calvino observed, is "a mental space,"<sup>48</sup> a *machine à penser* that sees the atelier and the archive coincide in the artist's gaze, inextricably linked to the construction of the work, indeed becoming the work themselves. "Between the walls of the studio—wrote Paolini—I can count on the most faithful work tools (pencils, set squares, compasses). There I can pretend to exist, to put my papers in order: or rather, stage a fake and calculated disorder to make me believe I'm at work."<sup>49</sup> This analytical mental order, this calculated disorder, is the premise of a practice that finds a natural extension in the lucid spatial organization that Paolini has transferred to his archive born by the Giulio and Anna Paolini Foundation established in Turin in 2004 as a union that binds artist and production, documentation and collection. Thus Concetta Damiani noted that the archive "documents the biographical-artistic story and preserves writings, correspondence, press reviews, photographs, catalogues and materials relating to personal and collective exhibitions," but also returns "the path of the works starting from preparatory documents and statements by the artist, photographic equipment, printed materials, news from collectors, up to the exhibition and bibliographic curriculum."<sup>50</sup> Luminous testimony to this relationship is also the sixty-seven works by the artist hosted in the archive, among which the presence of *Disegno geometrico* (1960), the first painting made by Paolini, stands out. This painting that opens the general catalogue of the artist, of which a total vision can be found in the digital architecture of the Foundation's website—a fascinating virtual white room designed by the artist himself—, reflects the relationship between archive and production, as art historian Maddalena Disch recalled, "the first work is already a catalogue of all the others: each subsequent work is nothing but an update of that first catalogue;"<sup>51</sup> a threshold work that opens to the catalogue and the archive, to the atelier and the space, "embracing in a single image all those past, present and future," as curator Daniela Lancioni observed.<sup>52</sup>

A further projection of the connection between archive and atelier matures around the refined work of Vincenzo Agnetti who, during the Seventies, worked on language, proposing verbal-visual reflections that are placed in the area of analytical propositions, where, as art critic Fliberto Menna wrote, "sheets and words are a pure statement, that is, signs through which the artist communicates a meaning or judgment, that is, a mental content that is, so to speak, behind the signs that





**Figure 3.**  
Giulio Paolini, *Synopsis*, 1998.  
The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas.  
Photo Croce & Wir.  
Courtesy of Fondazione Giulio e Anna  
Paolini, Torino.  
© Giulio Paolini.



**Figure 4.**  
Giulio Paolini, *Synopsis*, 1998.  
The Margulies Collection, Miami.  
Photo © Croce & Wir.  
Courtesy of Fondazione Giulio e Anna  
Paolini, Torino.  
© Giulio Paolini.

constitute the statement.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, a discourse that finds in the artist’s practice a conceptual origin close to Foucault’s observations and in particular convergent with an idea of archive that “it is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is the system of its functioning.”<sup>54</sup> The archival tension in Agnetti’s reflection, always stretched between analytical rigor and poetic impetus, also allows traces relating to mnemonic questions to emerge, to memory and to the forgetfulness that the archive inevitably produces, and to the relationship with the



cultural systems that are knotted around the famous oxymoron he created—“forget by heart”—“referring to the need to metabolise culture by changing its essence.”<sup>55</sup>

In 2015, the Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti was founded in Milan in the spaces of what had been the artist’s studio in via Machiavelli 30; the civic name *Machiavelli 30* was the title of a very refined poetic volume published by the artist in 1978, almost as if to seal an agreement between space and work. The archive reconstructs the relationships between some of the theoretical trajectories drawn by Agnetti’s research, the atelier in which they were designed and the functions of the archive. The curators have reinterpreted through the artist’s gaze this precious place full of meanings: “only through a prospective gaze, which starts from the artist’s intentions on the becoming of his work, can we reconstruct the concatenation of events and evaluate the outcomes today. The artist’s intentions must also be looked at from the point of view of the future that can grasp something, an element that had not been made explicit, intuited but not completely thought out,”<sup>56</sup> as Germana Agnetti, the artist’s daughter recalled. From this position and accompanied by the *Rammentatore critico*—a large notebook of published and unpublished notes, of notes on the genesis and structure of the work—, almost a mental catalogue of the linguistic variants analysed by Agnetti, the archive-atelier has undergone a gradual extroversion to the public. A season of exhibitions of the artist’s works accompanied by documents and reflections from the materials preserved in the archive, have produced a continuous exchange, a game of equivalences—“a figure is not just a

Figure 5

Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti. Exhibition view. Works by Vincenzo Agnetti: *IKing*, 1977; *Profezia*, 1970; *IKing*, 1977. Courtesy of Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, Milano.



figure, just as a word is not just a word... figure and word together are one thing,"<sup>57</sup> noted Agnetti in 1978—, which has found further nourishment in the environments in which they were conceived and created. Therefore this hypothesis relaunches the relationship between archive and atelier, which translates the desire to recover the unity between *Spazio Perduto Spazio Ricostruito*—as the title of a magnificent work by Agnetti from 1971 states—and “the privilege of being inhabitants and part of the space.”<sup>58</sup>

Thus the alignment of these three artist hypotheses highlights from different perspectives the intensity of the relationship between atelier and archive that projects itself into the present space almost like a hendiadys. We have observed that the atelier and archive form a fascinating conceptual unity that is at the same time the place of a practice that matures between inside and outside the walls of the artist’s studio and mental laboratory; an amphibious space of inspiration and construction of the work, but also a device for accumulation and classification. To conclude, if the archive and the atelier are places of initiation and mobilization of meanings, of production and maturation of the work, their unity is also a complex exemplification of the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, of unity in plurality—of intersection between art, life and museum—as proven by the research of Hermann Nitsch, Giulio Paolini and Vincenzo Agnetti.

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\*All quotations are the author’s translations unless stated otherwise.

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- 2 For an analysis of the exemplary value of Courbet’s painting, see Werner Hofmann, *Das Atelier: Courbets Jahrhundertbild* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2010).
- 3 Umberto Eco, *Vertigine della lista*, (Milano: Bompiani, 2009), 67.
- 4 Ibid, 116.
- 5 Concetta Damiani, *Gli archivi dell’arte. Gestione e rappresentazione tra analogico e digitale* (Milano: Editrice Bibliografica, 2023), 39.
- 6 Jacques Derrida, *Mal d’archive: une impression freudienne* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995).
- 7 Biancalucia Maglione, “Wunderkammer, archivio, atelier. Lo spazio di lavoro di Loris Cecchini,” in *Documenti d’artista. Processi, fonti, spazi, archiviazioni*, edited by Elena Marcheschi, Eva Marinai, Mattia Patti (Pisa: University Press, 2022), 149. About the relationship between the artist and the atelier, see the recent book by Antonello Tolve, *Studi d’artista. Un’avventura culturale* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2024).
- 8 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 211.
- 9 Stefania Zuliani, “Aprire lo studio. Una premessa,” in *Gli spazi di creazione dell’arte dall’età moderna al presente*, edited by Stefania Zuliani, (Milano: Mimesis, 2014), 11.
- 10 About this topic see: Angelo Trimarco, *Opera d’arte totale* (Roma: Luca Sossella Editore, 2001).
- 11 Angelo Trimarco, “C’era una volta l’atelier (e c’è ancora),” in *Gli spazi di creazione dell’arte dall’età moderna al presente*, edited by Stefania Zuliani (Milano: Mimesis, 2014), 81.
- 12 Brian O’Doherty, *Studio and Cube. On the relationship between where art is made and where art is displayed* (New York: A Buell Center / FORuM Project Publication, 2007), 6.
- 13 Adalgisa Lugli, “Il progetto del collezionista,” in *Ipotesi d’artista. Studi, ricerche, idee e progetti per modificare il mondo*, edited by Anna Valeria Borsari, Ginestra Calzolari, (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1985), 68.
- 14 Francesca Castellani, “Mettere in spazio l’archivio. Canovaccio di riflessioni su alcuni casi di allestimento,” in *Archivi esposti. Teorie e pratiche dell’arte contemporanea*, edited by Massimo Maiorino, Maria Giovanna Mancini, Francesca Zanella, (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2022), 41.
- 15 Maddalena Disch, “Le ragioni di un archivio d’artista,” in *Artist’s Archives and Estates. Cultural Memory between Law and Market*, edited by Alessandra Donati, Rachele Ferrario, Silvia Simoncelli, (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2018), 39.
- 16 A careful reading of this aspect of Celant’s research is offered by Lara Conte, “Germano Celant: l’archive comme pratique,” *Critique d’art* 55, (2020): 203-222.
- 17 Ilaria Bernardi, “Raccolta e organizzazione del materiale iconografico, biografico, storico, critico,” in *L’archivio d’artista. Principi, regole e buone pratiche*, edited by Alessandra Donati, Filippo Tibertelli de Pisis, (Milano: Johan&Levi, 2022), 102.
- 18 Maurizio Vitta, *Dell’abitare. Corpi, spazi, oggetti, immagini* (Torino: Einaudi, 2008), 125-126.
- 19 In this passage the atelier is radically transformed, it is no longer just a simple place of creation, but becomes an exhibition frame and a work itself, prefiguring the installation and site-specific practices of the following years. On this topic see: Jan Blanc, Florence Jaillet, *Dans l’atelier des artistes: Les coulisses de la création de Léonard de Vinci à Jeff Koons* (Paris: Beaux Arts Éditions, 2011).
- 20 Daniel Buren, “The Function of the Studio,” *October* 10, (1979), 51. About the relationship between the artist and the studio, see also Giorgio Agamben, *Autoritratto nello studio* (Milano: nottetempo, 2017).

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- 22 Deep Storage was the title of an exhibition at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center with works by over forty artists which explored imagery and processes thematic of storage: *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art*, edited by Ingrid Schaffner, Matthias Winze, (New York: Prestel, 1999).
- 23 Stefania Zuliani, *Esposizioni. Emergenze della critica d'arte contemporanea* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2011), 106-107.
- 24 Buren, "The Function of the Studio," 56.
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- 26 Giovanni Leghissa, "La nozione di archivio. Prospettive antropologiche e filosofiche," in *Archivi, luoghi, paesaggi digitali*, edited by Martina Corinati (Roma: Aracne, 2020), 250.
- 27 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 129.
- 28 Ibid, 130.
- 29 Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110, (2004), 5.
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- 31 Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ways of Curating* (London: Penguin Books, 2014).
- 32 Georges Perec, "Notes on the Objects to Be Found on My Desk," in Id., *Thoughts of Sorts*, edited by David Bellosm (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 2009), 14.
- 33 Ibid, 14.
- 34 Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. John Sturrock, (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 88.
- 35 Elio Grazioli, "L'atelier d'artista come dispositivo," *Doppiozero*, January 12, 2023, <https://www.doppiozero.com/latelier-dartista-come-dispositivo>. On the history of the atelier see also James Hall, *The Artist's Studio: A Cultural History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2022).
- 36 On this topic see also Anna Maria Guasch, *Arte y archivio: 1910-2010. Genalogías, tipologías y discontinuidades* (Madrid: Akal, 2011).
- 37 Cristina Baldacci, *Archivi impossibili. Un'ossessione dell'arte contemporanea* (Milano: Johan&Levi, 2016), 9.
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- 40 On the artist-atelier relationship see also the catalogue of the exhibition *L'atelier: l'artiste et ses lieux de création dans les collections de la Bibliothèque Kandinsky*, edited by Didier Schulmann and Anna-Lisa Rimmaudo (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2007).
- 41 Aleida Assman, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (New York: Cambridge Press, 2011), 345.
- 42 About this experience see: Massimo Maiorino, *Il Museo Hermann Nitsch. Archivio e laboratorio di museologia* (Roma-Napoli: Editori Paparo, 2023).
- 43 Achille Bonito Oliva, "Contro la morte del pubblico," in *Il Museo Hermann Nitsch Archivio Laboratorio per le Arti Contemporanee 2008-2020* (Napoli: Edizioni Morra, 2020), 195.
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- 45 Hermann Nitsch, "Il camice del pittore," in Id., *Museo Nitsch Napoli* (Napoli: Edizioni Morra, 2008), 11.
- 46 On this aspect of Paolini's research see Rachele Ferrario, Giulio Paolini. *Un viaggio a distanza* (Busto Arsizio: Nomos Edizioni, 2009).
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- 48 Italo Calvino, "La squadratura," in Giulio Paolini, *Idem* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), VII.
- 49 Giulio Paolini, "Conto alla rovescia," in *L'ora X, né prima né dopo*, edited by Anna Mattiolo, Giulio Paolini, (Milano: Electa, 2009), 16-17.
- 50 Damiani, *Gli archivi dell'arte*, 109.

- 51 Maddalena Disch, "Il catalogo è questo...", in *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato 1960-1999*, edited by Maddalena Disch (Milano: Skira, 1999), 33.
- 52 Daniela Lancioni, "Un enigma in prospettiva," in *Giulio Paolini. Gli Uni e gli altri. L'enigma dell'ora* (Firenze: Centro DI, 2010), 20.
- 53 Filiberto Menna, *Cronache degli anni Settanta. Arte e critica d'arte 1970-1980* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2017), 38.
- 54 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 129.
- 55 Bruno Corà, "Vincenzo Agnetti: note sulla memoria e dimenticanza nella critica alla cultura," in *Archivio 04* (Milano: Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, 2019), 42.
- 56 Germana Agnetti, "Con le mani nel passato guardando il futuro," in *Archivi esposti. Teorie e pratiche dell'arte contemporanea*, edited by Massimo Maiorino, Maria Giovanna Mancini, Francesca Zanella (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2022).
- 57 Vincenzo Agnetti, *Machiavelli 30* (Milano: Ugo Guanda, 1978).
- 58 Vincenzo Agnetti, "Lettera a Francoise Lambert," in *Archivio 03* (Milano: Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti, 2018), 10.