







Yvonne Rainer's Trio A at The People's Flag Show

Judson Memorial Church, 1970

Performed by Grand Union, including Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, and David Gordon

Videographer Unknown

VHS copy from a half-inch open real video

Themes of the Conference

- Exilic Spaces
- Communities and cultural understanding
- Diversity
- Diversity of the Diverse
- Performance and performativity
- Embodiment
- Control of Narratives
- Colonialism of collecting still haunts us—and it should
- “Reach out to them where they are and they will listen” Yes, but who are “they” – scare quotes intentional
- Programming

Does Anyone Remember 1995?

- ~~The 1995 RBMS Preconference “Collecting Cultures: The Politics and Practice of Building Special Collections”~~ brought scholars from Gender Studies, American Studies, African American Studies, Asian Pacific American Studies, Labor Studies, Chicano Studies, Fashion Studies, and a host of others together to talk about critical theory and the new opportunities and challenges for special collections.
- It was the last preconference before we created websites and it's lost from our collective memory.

“The Audience Is the
Archive” Special Collections and
Performance Studies

Marvin J. Taylor
Director, Fales Library
New York University

Lessons from the Art World

- “There is no longer one monolithic original artifact, and there is no longer one silver-jacketed preservation method. Instead, we need a layered preservation strategy that admits fragments and traces, emulation software, re-creation, and reassemblage.”
- Richard Rinhart, *Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive in Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach*, Guggenheim Museum, 2003.

Ten Years Ago

- “Although artworks are unique cultural artifacts, they are part of the larger body of intellectual and cultural production.” --Richard Rinehart
- Ann Cvetkovich: *Archive of Feelings*, 2003.
- Diana Taylor: *Archive and Repertoire*. 2003.
- Bibliography’s foundation in textual studies of Shakespeare and the bible.
- Turning oral culture into objects: texts, folios.

Diana Taylor

- Archive and Repertoire
- Performance Studies
- Foucault's *archiv*, vs. Taylor's
- Place of non-verbal in memory

Cvetkovich

- Archive of affect and Trauma studies.
- What is not allowed to be written down?
- Lesbian experience of AIDS, for example
- The archive of affect is transmitted through oral traditions and through archives of feeling.
- But what about our traditional materials?

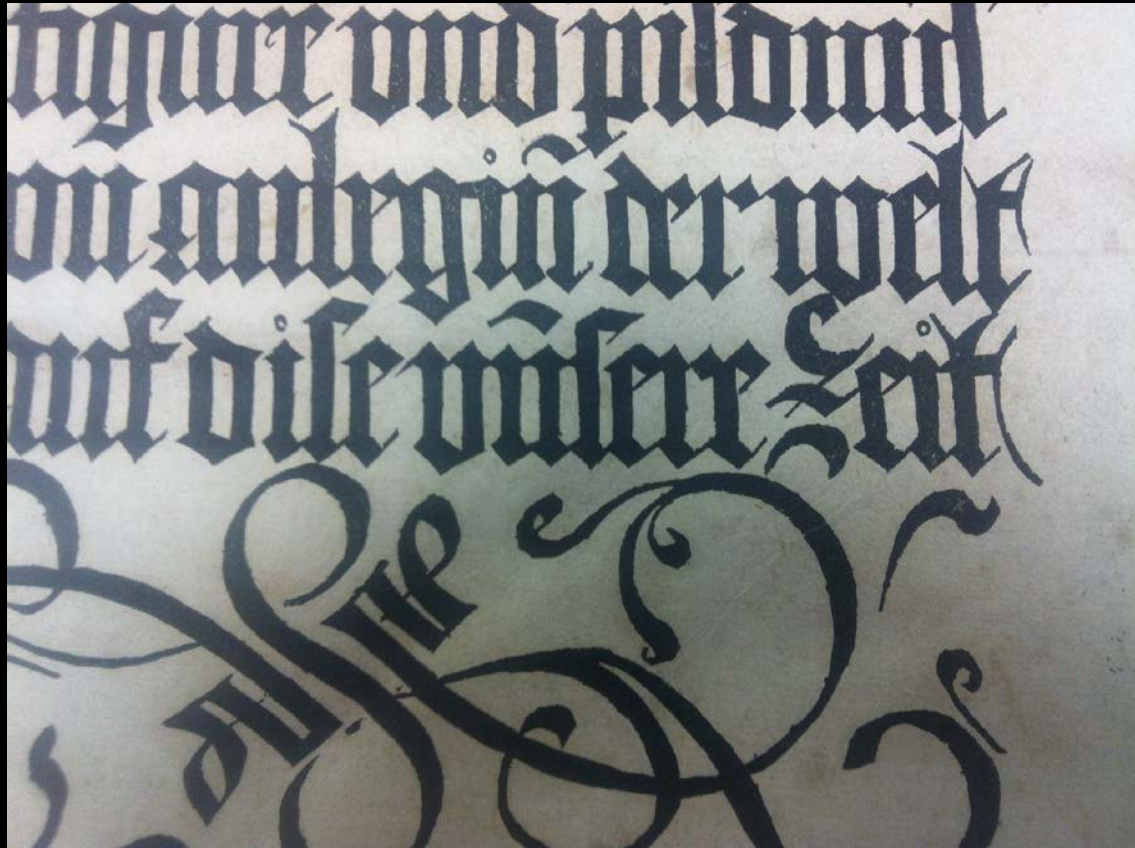
Books Performing



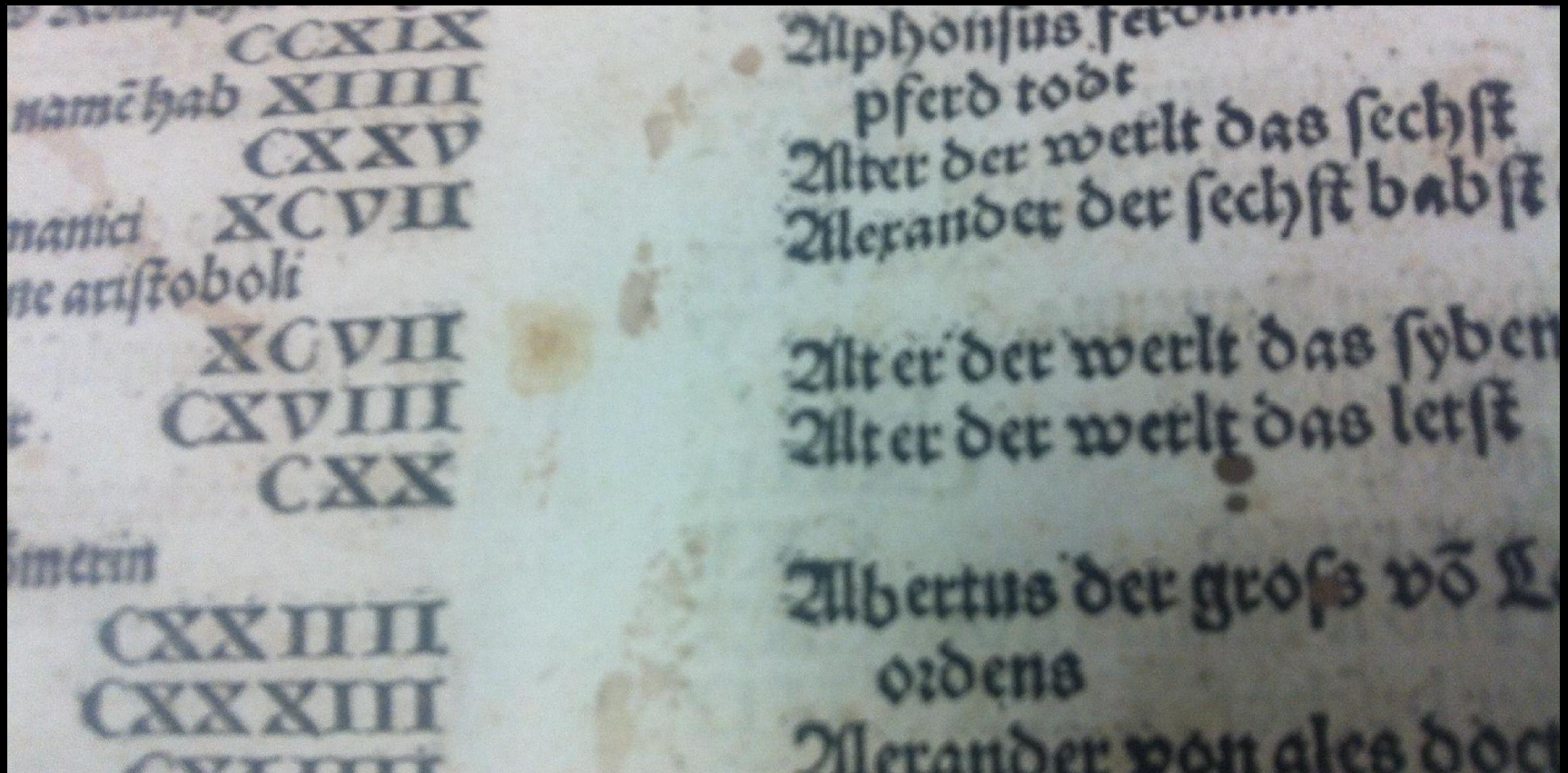
The Importance of Worms



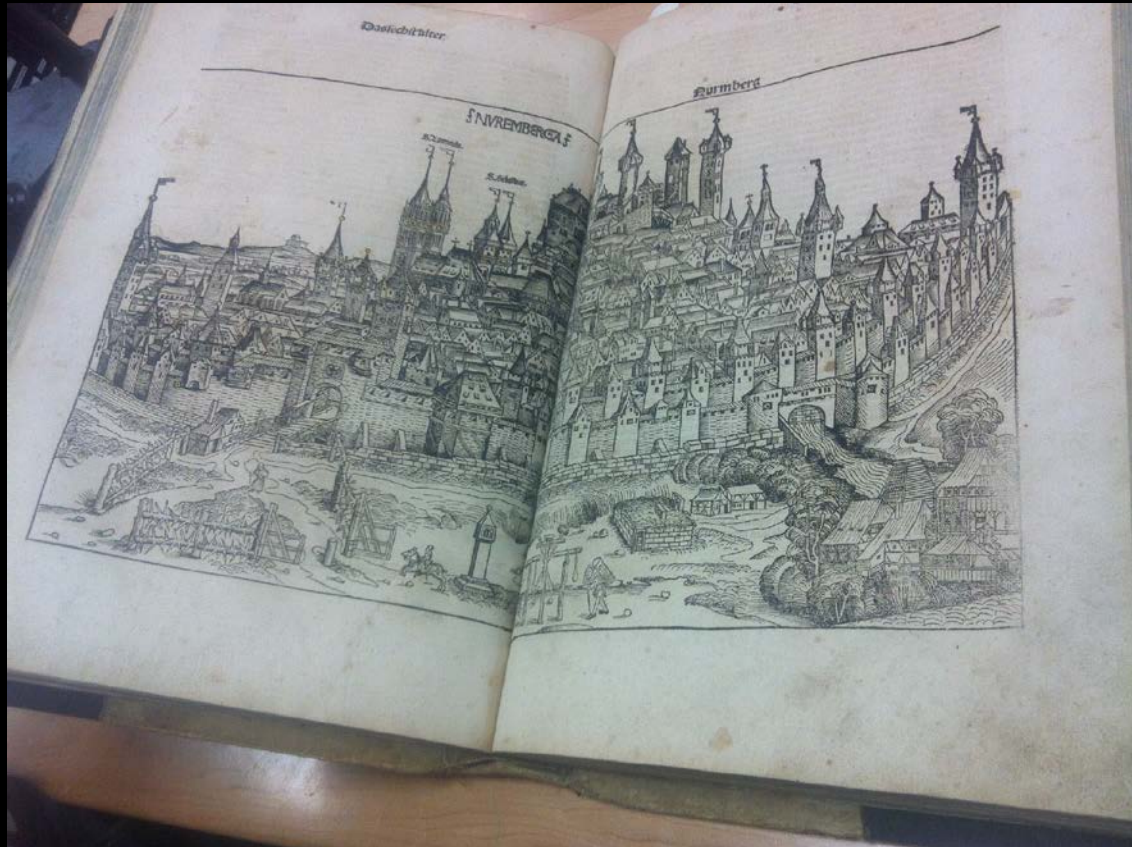
Teachable Moments



Looking Closely



Ostentatious



Moving Beyond

- Muffled music on crumbling audiotape, phantom films on scorched nitrate, vanished images on unreadable 5¼-inch floppy disks: the media is strewn with the recent victims of cultural oblivion and technological obsolescence. Overwhelmed by the deluge of endangered artworks, archivists and technicians can barely tally the dying, much less devise a strategy for preventing future casualties. --Jon Ippolito, “Accommodating the Unpredictable: The Variable Media Questionnaire” in *Permanence Through Change*.

Beyond Paper

- “It is going to take more than manila folders and telecine machines to preserve anything more of our cultural moment than the lifeless carcasses of forsaken mediums. We need artists—their information, their support, and above all their creativity—to outwit oblivion and obsolescence. That is why the variable media approach asks creators to play the central role in deciding how their work should evolve over time, with archivists and technicians offering choices rather than prescribing them.” --Jon Ippolito

“You’ve got to Stop!”

- Stop making the digization of paper a priority.
- If we don’t act now, we will lose the “incunable” period of born-digital and electronic media.
- Most paper from the last 40 years will be OK in 10 years. Video, audio, and digital files will not.

What Is Storage for These Items?

- Should dedicated hardware such as *TV Garden's* video monitors be stored? How about Gonzalez-Torres's black licorice candies? Both of these commodities could easily go out of production and become unavailable for future refabrications, and yet both also tend to go "stale" when left in a cardboard box in a museum's warehouse. Storage, the default preservation strategy for museums from the 18th to the 20th centuries, is proving to be of limited value in the 21st. --Jon Ippolito

Why We Need the Art World

- Special Collections have been slow to respond to born-digital and electronic media.
- Conservators of conceptual and post-conceptual art have been facing issues of media conservation and access for more than 50 years. We can learn from them.

Don't Forget These Terms. They are our future.

- Emulation
- Migration
- Reinterpretation

Emulation

- To emulate an artwork... is not to store digital files on disk or physical artifacts in a warehouse, but to create a facsimile of them in a totally different medium. An especially promising application of emulation is when new software impersonates old hardware. Jon Ippolito

Migration

- To migrate an artwork is not to imitate its appearance with a different medium, but to upgrade its medium to a contemporary standard, accepting any resulting changes in the look and feel of the work.

Reinterpretation

- In some cases... there is no clear industry standard to upgrade to; when hardware is replaced by a different apparatus with the same social or metaphoric function (a teletype becomes a cell phone), or when a performance is recast in a completely different time period and setting (Hamlet in a chat room), we say the artwork has been reinterpreted. This strategy takes the greatest liberties with the original, but also represents the most flexible approach technical obsolescence. Jon Ippolito

The One and Only, John Sex!

- CNN did not keep footage of interviews in the 1980s. They were all taped over.
- John set his VHS machine to tape him being interviewed in 1986. This file was transferred from the only copy.
- John Sex died in 1990 of AIDS at age 34.

The Karmic Hit We All Have to Take



East Village Underwater during Sandy, 2013
