Amy C. Miranda

Palmyrene Portraiture through Gazes Cast. The Practice of Collective Memory in Archaeological Archives

Abstract Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, archaeologists have worked diligently on preserving the art and architecture of Palmyra. A tool in these heritage preservation efforts has been the archive of Danish archaeologist, Harold Ingholt, which documents hundreds of Palmyrene funerary sculptures. This chapter outlines an approach to the Ingholt Archive that foregrounds the practice of collective memory-making. Starting from the assumption that memory is never wholly individual, but social, the paper utilizes Bourdieu's theory of practice in the gazes cast upon the Ingholt Archive as a strategy for collective memory formation. In tracing the continuity of engagement with the portraits since the ancient city's 'rediscovery', the approach places knowledge and action in a positive dialectical relationship. Such an approach centered on practice considers the forming, storing, and promoting of memory by engaging with the portraits through the archive in the present-day.

Deeply carved, her almond-shaped eyes cast their gaze back at the viewer (fig. 1). The irises, once inlaid, strengthen their penetrative effect, as do the shadows resulting from the depth of carving. The eyes sit in shallow sockets beneath heavy eyelids and thin, incised brows. She is the 'Beauty of Palmyra', a funerary portrait of an elite woman from the late 2nd cent. AD, and her gaze speaks volumes. Her eyes draw the viewer in, inviting him or her to continue looking, to search her face for clues to her story. The act of prolonged looking will allow the viewer to slowly unravel the many narrative threads contained in her expressive eyes. The viewer's gaze, then, is no less important than that of the Beauty; it works as much more than a second glance and instead is an essential tool in art historical research. The pleasure

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Fig. 1: An archive sheet for PS 675.
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of viewing such ancient portraiture exceeds her physical or formal allure, as the viewer uses his or her gaze to revisit the past. Close-looking has the potential to breathe new life into a familiar sculpture through resulting re-interpretations and reutilizations. This paper seeks to excavate the narrative stratigraphies of the Beauty and her contemporaries by casting a gaze at an archive of ancient Roman sculpture. This contribution explores the portrait sculpture of ancient Palmyra, a provincial Roman city, present-day Tadmor, Syria. The province of Syria was situated along the empire's eastern frontier, as it bordered the Parthians of Mesopotamia to the east and Nabataeans of the Arabian Penninsula to the southeast. As an oasis city in the Syrian desert, Palmyra played a critical role in caravan trade with the Near East, Persian Gulf, and beyond, having outposts along the Silk Road. Palmyra presents itself as an ideal case study for a reflection on the productive work that a second gaze offers. My exploration into the 'intertextual' attributes of Roman portraiture reception comes in the form of the Ingholt Archive, an annotated 20th cent.-record of excavated Palmyrene portraits. Of the rich body of artistic material that comes from Palmyra's funerary contexts, I focus here primarily on the Beauty of Palmyra and other Palmyrene women as they are recorded in the Ingholt Archive.

In the first part of this paper, I introduce Harald Ingholt and the creation of his archive. I argue that the formation of the archive over the course of the 20th cent. and its contemporary uses is a practice of human-material engagement. My approach to the archive differs from traditional approaches that think of the archive solely as a source for studying the ancient sculptures and instead considers an alternative: the archive as art object itself. My alternative approach to the archive draws upon Bourdieu's theory of practice. When the archive – its pictorial and written components as one – is approached in a manner that foregrounds practice, its critical role in collective memory making can emerge. I suggest that the archive is a material component in which collective memory resides and is generated, and relies upon the assumption that memory is never wholly individual, but social. The aspects of engagement with the Ingholt Archive – its original, published, and digital formats – rely upon the relationship between knowledge and action to form and reform social groups. These communities, or group identities, are expressed and shaped through tangible and visual traces. In the second part, I take the Beauty of Palmyra as one case study from the folios of the Ingholt Archive. This well-known portrait of a Palmyrene woman from the late 2nd to early 3rd cent. AD, resides in Copenhagen's Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek and features prominently in the archive as well as in present-day scholarship on Palmyrene portraiture. I would like to explore questions of practice in the relationship between archive and sculpture, arguing that ancient Palmyrene portraiture across these two distinct media play a critical role in collective memory, consciously or unconsciously. A second gaze cast upon Palmyra, through the Ingholt Archive, I argue, is not merely engagement with simulacra or reuse of an image, but plays a critical role in an integrated Palmyrene history.

Ingholt and the archive

The Beauty's exotic eyes lay beneath her beaded headdress, rather distinctive features among the canon of Roman sculpture. Palmyra is, of course, exceptional as it provides the largest corpus of funerary portraiture from a community outside the Italian peninsula. This corpus of almost 4,000 portraits has been spread around the world across 235 collections, notably the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, the Musée du Louvre in Paris, and the Arkeoloji Müzesi in Istanbul[1]. But Palmyrene portraiture also sets itself apart in style. The funerary portraits are unlike their Italian counterparts of the Roman imperial period, which draw heavily upon Classical and Hellenistic Greek ideals of beauty. Instead, Palmyra's strong sense of local identity, developed at the edge of the Empire, is reflected in its idiosyncratic funerary portraiture. Highly stylized, the portraits capture the likenesses of the deceased in a locally specific manner, unmistakably Palmyrene. Much has been made of these portraits in recent scholarship – the work of Rubina Raja with the Palmyra Portrait Project since December 2011 deserves mention[2] – and since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the preservation of these sculptures became a priority among the cultural heritage community[3]. The recent publication of the Ingholt Archive allows for further investigation into the histories of these alluring objects and sparks new research questions about the sculptures and their original context as well as their afterlives[4].

Widening the lens out from the Beauty's eyes, her full visage comes into focus. The cool, pale limestone is complimented by a few remaining traces of pigment: a contrasting warm golden tone is easily visible on her clothing, headdress, and jewelry. Her left hand, now broken, was raised to pull back her veil, while her right forearm is folded across her chest. Even from a distance, the Beauty's gaze has a penetrating ability. It is perhaps for this reason, in addition to her fine state of preservation, that Harald Ingholt was so captivated by her upon his discovery in 1929. The excavation of the Beauty in the late 1920s is not an isolated event. The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, which was in effect from 1923–1946, saw a great amount of foreign

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1 Raja 2018; Raja 2019b. See also, Bobou et al. 2023, 47 n. 4.

2 Kropp – Raja 2014, 393. R. Raja, director, and the participants of the Palmyra Portrait Project, funded by the Carlsberg Foundation, have produced numerous publications since the project's inception in 2012. A full bibliography of the project has been published online: Palmyra Portrait Project, Project publications <https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Palmyra_Portrait_Project_full_bibliography_March_2021/14259707/4> (29. 03. 2024).

3 For example, the ALIPH foundation generously funded the "Archive Archaeology" project, directed by R. Raja, which was responsible for publishing the Ingholt Archive, in addition to other Syrian heritage projects. I was a postdoctoral fellow on the project from October 2020–October 2022, which made this research possible. See ALIPH Foundation, Our actions <https://www.aliph-foundation.org/en/projects> (29. 03. 2024) for full list of the foundation's projects.

4 Bobou et al. 2023.

archaeological interest in the region, and it was against this backdrop that Ingholt and others conducted their excavations. The mandate from the newly formed League of Nations in the aftermath of World War One partitioned the former Ottoman Empire and brought Syria, Lebanon, and parts of what is now southeast Turkey under French control. While the mandate claimed to be an arrangement different from colonialism as the region would eventually be eligible for self-governance, one cannot help but see the period as one of colonial control in Syrian history. Similar to the British control over what is now Iraq in the same historical moment, many artworks of Near Eastern origin were exported to collections in Europe and the United States, separating much archaeological material from its local context. The removal of the sculptures from Syria during the mandate is a key moment in the story of Palmyra's funerary portraiture. The archive is a materialization of the colonial period, as it documents captive sculptures that have been removed from their country of origin. Many memories are contained within the archive and many communities formed around the archive and its sculptures. With the current efforts in art historical and archaeological fields to decolonize histories and include narratives from traditionally underrepresented groups, archival research presents a unique opportunity to access the past.

Ingholt was a Danish archaeologist active during the 20th cent., completing his higher doctoral dissertation, *Studier over Palmyrensk Skulptur,*[5] in 1928 and participating in archaeological missions to Syria[6]. A life-long commitment to the archaeology of Palmyra allowed Ingholt to collect hundreds of images of Palmyrene funerary portraiture and curate them into an extensive archive, complete with his annotations. Shortly before his death in 1985, Ingholt donated this resource to the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, where the archive still resides today[7]. Neatly stored in a series of blue binders on the Glyptotek's shelves, the archive was studied and reorganized by Glyptotek curator Gunhild Ploug, culminating in the publication of a new catalog of Palmyrene sculpture at the Glyptotek in 1993[8]. In early 2023, the Ingholt Archive was published across four volumes and the folios put online, thereby providing widespread access to the resource[9].

5 Bobou et al. 2021.
6 Ingholt excavated in Palmyra in 1924, 1925, 1928, and the 1930s. He also excavated at Hama from 1930–1938. Raja – Sørensen 2015a, 26. 58; Raja – Sørensen 2015b, 26. 58; Raja 2019a; Raja et al. 2021.
7 Bobou et al. 2022.
8 Ploug 1993.
9 Bobou et al. 2023. As an open access resource: R. Raja, Ingholt Archive. Figshare. Collection <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.c.5509725.v1> (29. 03. 2024).

Since the initiation of the Palmyra Portrait Project in December 2011, the variety of studies conducted on the corpus of Palmyrene sculptures has been significant[10]. The more recent publications on the Ingholt Archive itself have been one direction that these studies have undertaken[11]. Yet, within these studies the relationship between human actors, geography and culture has not been well-explored or fully articulated. I argue that geography, specifically the role of the French Mandate, and culture do play an important role in the construction of collective memory. Following what art historian of the ancient Near East Marian Feldman has suggested for Levantine ivories, I proposed that the critical link that unites these aspects of the Ingholt Archive is practice. Practice establishes a network of multidirectional exchange between human actors, geography and culture, "such that all participants in the network both exert a force and are acted upon by other forces"[12]. I understand this proposal as humans and objects in a potentially asymmetrical or uneven exchange of aspects of identity. As such, human actors, geography, and culture, are conceptually linked through the practice. With the process of engagement in mind, I would like to develop the Ingholt Archive as a collective memory practice.

Memory as practice

Connecting memory concepts to archival research is the notion of practice, which I argue, is the generating of an embodied history. I argue that in the case of the Ingholt Archive, memory contributes to emerging cultural identities through a shared knowledge and experience in both the distant past and today. Meaning, that I suggest the archive is an embodied history with deep continuity, which can be best understood as a practice of social memory. In this suggestion is embedded the argument for a link between history and memory that is materialized in the Ingholt Archive. The archive gives physical, tangible shape to shared memories and histories, and it is this social aspect of memory that relies upon ideas of practice. To first establish a definition of memory, I turn to the text *On Collective Memory* by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, particularly the text's conclusion[13]. The 20th cent.-French sociologist builds upon Durkheimian notions of memory to establish

10 See note 2 above, for a full project bibliography.
11 See, for example, Bobou et al. 2023; Miranda – Raja 2023.
12 Feldman 2012.
13 Halbwachs 1992.

the existence of a social memory. Halbwachs' theorization of memory posits that social frameworks condition individual thought and action and that there is no such thing as a universal collective memory that transcends a group composed of individuals, but that individuals – and their thoughts, emotions, and memories – develop and function socially. Social frameworks are the framework upon which groups are formed. The frameworks can be constructed by objects, as objects, such as the Ingholt Archive, are both a means and repository of memory that allow individuals and groups of individuals to relate. Finding common ground between individuals to form groups through engagement with common objects is how I understand Halbwachs' suggestion that social frameworks are essential to memory. I aim to take this a step further and argue that the archive not only connects individuals to Syria's ancient past, but also help them to shape their present and connection to other communities.

I further refine my definition of memory studies through the work of social historian Paul Connerton[14]. Connerton picks up Halbwachs' theories and expands upon them with a focus on performance as a primary means of building and perpetuating social memory. Social memory, he suggests, is generated and relies on performance. For Connerton, memory is only accessed through traces of the past and, as such, is reliant upon performances that are strengthened through engagement with objects[15]. Thus, there are both material and immaterial (performance) aspects to memory. The relationship between human actors and objects is critical to the formation and perpetuation of memory. This relationship is performed both consciously and unconsciously through what he calls inscribed and incorporated practices: inscribed practices 'store and retrieve' information external to the human body, such as in print or on computers, and is a highly self-conscious action; incorporated practices can be conveyed either intentionally or unintentionally, and are practices that are habitual such as a handshake or a smile[16]. These two aspects of memory, inscribed and incorporated, are not mutually exclusive and indeed have areas of overlap. It is through the theories of Halbwachs and Connerton that I conceptualize memory as highly social and variegated, ever shifting and reforming.

I find a link between archival research and memory studies in the theory of practice advanced by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and my application of his theory stresses the social dimension of practice in the process of

14 Connerton 1989.
15 Connerton 1989, 13. 37.
16 Connerton 1989, 72 f.

memory[17]. Bourdieu's scholarship, notably *The Logic of Practice,* provides a theoretical construct within which I suggest memory-making strategies are at work[18]. The strategies are unconscious and rooted in action, a bodily logic, not unlike what Connerton's inscribed and incorporated practices. With this in mind, what Bourdieu calls 'know how', I understand as embodied practices in the social world, developing one's 'feel for the game', which stems from *habitus. Habitus* describes the way by which human actors pre-subjectively perceive and respond to subjective social experiences and environments so that they are inculcated and internalized. A critically important aspect of the *habitus* is its relationship to a bodily logic: social structures become embodied as habits, skills, and dispositions that work in a practical way, conscious and unconscious. Utilizing Bourdieu's perspective allows me to emphasize the social dimension of the memory practices that I see at play in the Ingholt Archive. On a very basic level, the repetitive action or learned *habitus* that happens with creating or studying the archive, allows human actors to develop his or her 'feel for the game', and internalize the behavior. Analogously, I see memory as an ever-evolving practice, shifting and reshaping along with humans rather than a singular crystallized form. The archive is never 'finished' or 'complete', but will continue to grow, change, and refocus as scholars utilize the resource. The papers in this volume are considering texts and objects through a second gaze, which I suggest is active rather than passive and generates more than just another glance, but also a third, fourth and so on. The practice of visiting and revisiting the archive, of viewing and reviewing the sculptures are behaviors than generate meaning. In other words, the 'meaningfulness' of the Ingholt Archive is in doing, or the gazes cast.

Bourdieu's theory of practice and an understanding of social memory through Halbwachs and Connerton assert the critical role of objects. Collective memory as a practice suggests that the Ingholt Archive is imbued with agency. The archive as an object of study itself is not only acted upon or consumed by humans through their embodied engagement, but I argue that the archive shares in the power relations at play. Its evolutions effect human actors changing how one responds, feels, and acts. The Ingholt Archive's material form allows scholars to access the past of ancient Palmyra and of 20th cent.-western archaeology in a way that is distinct from narrative histories. As the ancient Palmyrenes graphically commemorated their deceased through portraiture, the archive commemorates the long-ago culture and the

17 Bourdieu 1977.
18 Bourdieu 1990.

practices of archaeologists in the more recent past. The Palmyrene funerary portraits act as a material record of a society that wishes to remember, and developed a distinct local style of illustrating a belonging to that society[19]. The enduring nature of Palmyra's funerary reliefs, and the continuity of memory into present-day archaeology through the Ingholt Archive illustrate the foundational nature of memory to social groups and community identities. The Ingholt Archive is not merely a collection of images, but an art object with a degree of agency in the formation and perpetuation of collective memory. Bourdieu's theory of practice is essential to understanding how history can be an embodied practice, so that users of the archive internalize memory. The archive, through practice, keeps Palmyra's past alive. The shape of memories of Palmyra has grown and transformed over centuries, and these movements of Palmyrene memory continue into the present as users of the archive store and retrieve knowledge. Palmyrene culture is dynamic, suffering significant blows due to war and looting, but continues to form and reform through the practice of memory that takes place with the material archive.

Palmyrene portraiture through gazes cast

The Beauty of Palmyra is pasted at the center of nine separate archive sheets (fig. 2). The sheets range from pale brown to yellow in tone, with annotations in various pens and pencils scribbled alongside the photographs. Ingholt wrote his notes in Danish, also listing bibliography for the portraits in French, German, and English. Vertically written in the top right corner of each sheet is the number 675, a number assigned to the portrait by Ingholt. Centered at the top of each sheet, in quotation marks, is "PS 885", a number assigned by Ploug during her reorganization. An investigation of the archive sheets related to the Beauty of Palmyra allow me to articulate how engagement with the archive is a memory practice.

It is not possible to ascertain which of the images of the Beauty Ingholt obtained first, but one image of the nine is unique (fig. 3). Rather than a photograph of the Beauty before a blank background, this small image shows her in an exterior setting upon a sandy ground. Written on the sheet at the image's bottom right corner is "Qasr Abjad", or "the white house" in Arabic, which is the name of a tomb in Palmyra's West Necropolis. As has been

19 Assmann 2006, 7.

Fig. 2: The nine archive sheets for PS 675.
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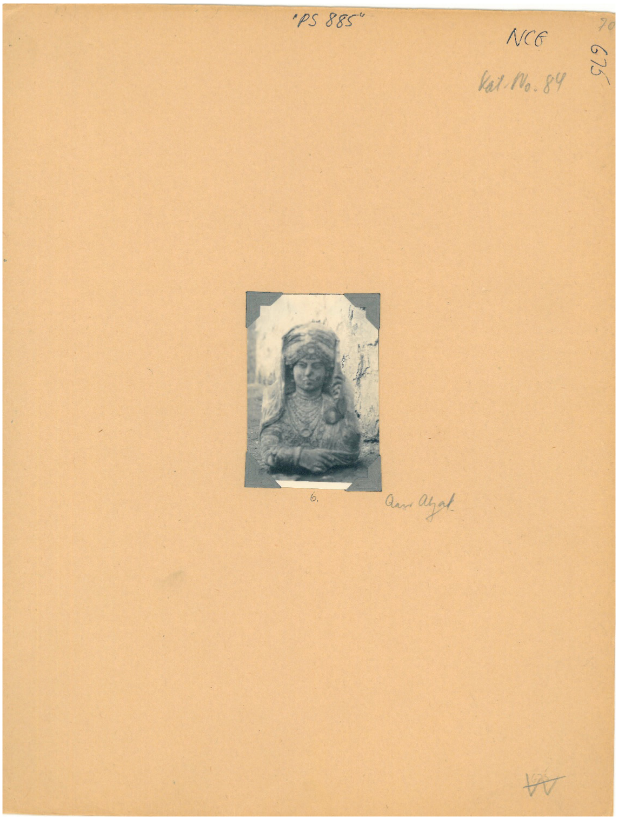

Fig. 3: An archive sheet for PS 675.

pointed out by Raja and others, Ingholt excavated the portrait in 1929 and Qasr Abjad is the presumed archaeological context for the portrait[20].

The Beauty of Palmyra is an enigma in that we do not know who she was in life. We can surmise that she was of the local elite, based on her high degree of ornamentation and high quality of the portrait. She acquired the moniker 'Beauty of Palmyra' from Ingholt, who writes in his excavation diary that she is "the most beautiful female bust I have ever seen"[21]. Other than the fact that the portrait must come from the Qasr Abjad tomb in Palmyra's

20 Raja et al. 2020. Cf. Raja 2015.
21 Raja 2019a, 44 f.

Fig. 4: An archive sheet for PS 681.

west necropolis, we know little about the woman[22]. Most Palmyrene funerary portraits include inscriptions on the loculus, often appearing on either side of the subject's head. As inscriptions increase the market value of the objects, it is not unusual to come across falsified inscriptions. There are many examples of original inscriptions and they are rather formulaic. A loculus relief, known to Ingholt as PS 681, is written in Palmyrene Aramaic to the right of the woman's head and reads "Ahita, daughter of Hairan, alas!" (fig. 4).[23] We can imagine that the portrait of the Beauty once contained a similar inscription that identified her and her family through her father's line.

22 Raja et al. 2020 and Raja 2015.
23 Bobou et al. 2022.

While not my primary example of the intertextuality at play, in PS 681, we see the relationship between text and image in Palmyrene funerary portraiture. The text is simple, “Ahita, daughter of Hairan, alas”. It appears across three distinct lines and we assume that the woman depicted is the Ahita mentioned in the inscription. This is likely so, but such as assumption illustrates the problematic tendency to view works of art through linguistic frameworks. As an art historian of the ancient world, I concede that I am biased and seek to promote understandings of works of art outside the historical legacy in which verbal and textual evidence is more highly valued. This textual supremacy that is deeply entrenched in archaeological practice has been challenged in recent times, as scholars seek to elevate the status of material evidence. Yet, we so often rely on the text to tell us what has happened. In the case of the Beauty we have no text, and as such, her identity remains a mystery. This does not mean that the sculpture does not have anything to communicate or mean. Rather, thinking along lines that separate text and image into opposing categories, or reduce images to their accompanying texts, limits understandings of the ancient engagement with such portraits. Rather there is an intertextual performance at play, one that is highly social and is critical to the development of collective memory-making.

The sculptures were created during the Roman Empire as an act of remembering the deceased. It must not be forgotten that Palmyrene portraits are of a funerary nature and despite their idealized physiognomy they are meant to represent real individuals. Thousands of such portraits were made and the tombs were visited by the family. These tombs are familial, containing generations. One could visit these tombs either below the earth or in a distinctive Palmyrene tower tomb and participate in the social act of remembering. The almost generic nature of Palmyrene funerary portraits and the formulaic inscriptions, from our modern perspective are contributions to the unique shape of Palmyrene culture. Yet, for the Palmyrenes, their culture is not exotic but familiar, indoctrinated, *habitus.* For those visiting the tombs, the repeated viewing of these objects is an internalized behavior that builds memory and community. While this memory and community building is specific to each family and each tomb, the practice of building family tombs and visiting the deceased is a larger, Palmyrene-wide practice. Here, I would like to stress the significance of engagement and entanglement of human entities with the physical world, and how approaching Palmyrene material this way promotes social identity and memory-making processes. We may not know exactly what these objects truly meant to their original audience, but their attention to details, adherence to a locally-specific style, and inscriptions lamenting the passing of the deceased were all there for the viewer to spark memory and emotion. Moreover, I find the practice of visiting and revisiting the deceased indicative of how these portraits were meaningful. Or, the meaningfulness of the sculptures is neither singular, nor stable, but forever shifting and reforming together through human engagement. Thus they are unstable memories despite the permanence of the stone upon which the visages and inscriptions are carved. After generations the portraits are persons unknown to the living, but nevertheless critical to family identity and memory. As such, the distance of bonds, impermanence of memory, and tactivity of human remembrance all work to develop Palmyrene portraits as social and dynamic, and this echoes on in the afterlives of the sculptures.

My primary interest in the Ingholt Archive is the photographs of the portrait sculptures, and as Ingholt was also interested in the sculptures as well as their inscriptions, seems to share my bias that it is the images that drive the archive. Ingholt gathered multiple views of the same sculpture even, in the case of the Beauty, multiple of the same image. Even if Ingholt's intentions were not so, these photographs are today, also art objects in their own right. This of course raises questions of artist intentionality which are often difficult, yet nevertheless enticing to disentangle. Today the archive sheets remain an object of study and their photography evermore important to dissect. The frontal views of the Beauty against a black background with a diffused light source, yield low contrast images, softening shadows and obscuring details. The images in the archive downplay the drama of the loculus relief and, as black and white images, fail to capture her splendid polychromy. The photograph of the Beauty taken on a bias reveals the depth of her carving to the viewer and more details of her headdress and jewelry. This image is perhaps the last in a series of what I suggest are four historical moments in which the Beauty was photographed (fig. 2). First, the image taken shortly after the moment of excavation; second, there is the Beauty against a black background; the third shows her again against a black backdrop, but this time seated upon a white plinth; fourth and finally, is the image of the Beauty on an angle, not quite a profile view, also upon her white plinth. These moments show a continued interest in the portrait over time, and while she is unchanging, the circumstances around her continue to evolve.

Across the nine folios that document the Beauty of Palmyra, Ingholt and Ploug have written various notations. Some folios have many notes – mostly bibliographic references to the sculpture – while others are left mostly blank. Here we see the archive is a memory practice with Ingholt and Ploug returning to the folios over and over again, adding and subtracting. It is a repetitive and practical behavior, that internalizes the memory, a *habitus.* They, like

Fig. 5: An archive sheet for PS 675.
© Palmyra Portrait Project and Rubina Raja. Ingholt Archive at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.

scholars presently using the archive, are continually forming and reforming the memories attached to the folios. By adding, correcting, or updating information about the sculpture, the archive remains a work in progress, ever awaiting a fresh gaze to be cast upon it.

In these instances, like my earlier example of the inscription accompanying PS 681, we see a relationship between text and image on the folios. While we can assume that the relief and inscription were made at approximately the same historical moment, these annotations were added at any number of visits to the folios. In an example of the Beauty, we see annotations in blue pen as well as red pen, and pencil (fig. 5). With the image mounted at the center of the sheet, we see "Plate three, 4" above the image in red. At the top of the sheet, in pen, is "PS 885" while in the top right corner we see in pen and pencil, "NCG/KAT. No. 84/PS 675." At the image's lower right corner, in pencil, is written "favre" or colors in Danish, documenting her polychromy. Also in pencil, directly below the image is "6a". There are then two bibliographic references written in pen below the image: Dorothy Mackay's 1949 article in the journal *Iraq,* titled "The Jewelry of Palmyra and Its Significance", and Michael Grant's book *The World of Rome* from 1960. At the very bottom of the folio is written "Qasr el". The compact lines, and cross outs, in addition to the different writing implements indicates a revisiting of the folio and a forming, storing, and promoting of memory through engagement with the folios.

For a user of the archive like myself, the image and the text are both significant in engagement with the portrait. I understand the archive sheet as an art object in its own right, with the relationship between the text and the image perhaps considered a paratextual performance that promotes engagement. The presence of a text (in pencil, at the margin) in close proximity to another text or image has the potential to evoke memories and define a genre. Moreover, the two, the image and its accompanying text, are inseparable. The relationship between text and image is dynamic, informing each other and challenging modern assumptions of their separability and categorization. Certainly, images of the Beauty exist without text and the sculpture of the Beauty is presumably missing her original inscription, but in the instance of the archive, text and image work together to engage the viewer.

By engaging with the archive users are participating in a community through social memory. I am suggesting that social memory and shared archival engagement operate together as partners in a reciprocal relationship, rather than one existing prior to the other. The material presence of the archive provides a visual shape to shared memories, and social recollections promote the production and consumption of similar media. In this way, objects, such as the archive, both reflect and construct social frameworks.

Palmyra through foreign eyes

Palmyra's heyday came to an end in AD 272/3, when the Roman Emperor Aurelian sacked the city twice with his troops[24]. The destruction was a direct result of the Palmyrene's bid for independence under the famed ruler

24 Hartmann 2001; Smith 2013, 175–181.

Zenobia[25]. While she ruled in the stead of her underage son, Wallahbat, following the death of her husband Odeinathus, Zenobia expanded the Palmyrene territory to include Egypt and parts of Asia Minor. The sack of Palmyra likely did not destroy the city entirely as a Roman legion was installed there afterwards, but it certainly lost its centrality to the caravan trade and therefore its fame. The period between the end of the 3rd cent. and the Early Islamic period as well as the medieval period has only recently begun to attract attention through scholarly investigation[26]. Palmyra was 'rediscovered' by European travelers on several occasions, and perhaps the most famous rediscovery was by James Dawkins and Robert Wood, who came to Palmyra in 1751. A 1758 painting by Gavin Hamilton, now in the Scottish National Gallery (NG 2666), shows an idealized version of the Dawkins and Wood expedition and presents an image of Palmyra through a western gaze. This painting was also produced as a print, allowing the image to be widely circulated. The publication by Wood and Dawkins documents the ancient city's architecture through description, drawing, and etching, thereby popularizing the site amongst Europeans and making it the focus of many travelers' attention. Shortly after, in 1758, a famous set of drawings was produced by Louis-Francois Cassas furthering western – not to mention colonial – interests in the area. Despite this early but significant attention from Europe, Palmyra did not fully capture the imagination of the western world until the 19th cent. The late 19th cent. saw the arrival of both scholars and tourists, the latter of whom were on tours through the Holy Land. The Danish theologian and first Professor of the Study of Islam in Denmark, Johannes Elith Østrup, was one such visitor to Palmyra in the 1890s and his published writings about the journey describe vandalism to the site. According the Østrup, the conditions at Palmyra in the 1890s were not unlike today's looting practices[27].

The 20th cent. saw continued western interventions in Palmyra, but in a more systematic manner with the beginning of formalized excavations, as I mentioned earlier in this paper. Since the rise of ISIS in Syria, the systematic destruction of cultural heritage across the country, and diaspora of Syrian nations due to ongoing conflict, conversations around cultural heritage preservation have come to the forefront. The scholarly discussions around the Syrian, specifically Palmyrene, cultural heritage have developed in parallel

25 For recent literature on Zenobia, see Hvidberg-Hansen 2002; Yon 2002/03; Sartre-Fauriat – Sartre 2014; Andrade 2018.

26 Intagliata 2018. For further references to late antique and Early Islamic Palmyra, see Gawlikowski 2009; Intagliata 2019.

27 Spencer 2022.

with the increased use of archives in archaeological practice. The Ingholt Archive has much potential to generate new scholarship as well as engage the public and establish what is at stake.

Documentation of Palmyra has been ongoing since the mid-18th cent. and the expedition of Dawkins and Wood. But since the 20th cent. and the systematic excavations in the area, there have been archaeological drawings and photographs of the rediscovered material. Ingholt's excavation diaries are rife with sketches that accompany his musings, but the Ingholt Archive relies on photography – that of Ingholt and many, many others[28]. The archive grew over the course of approximately 50 years – from Ingholt's 1928 dissertation to shortly before his death in 1985 – with Ingholt continuously gathering images of Palmyrene funerary sculpture from colleagues, museums, scholarly publications, and auction catalogs.

Photography, as a technology, greatly assisted archaeological excavations and has allowed images of Palmyrene funerary portraiture to circulate the world. These photographs, collected by Ingholt – who often gathered multiple images of a single sculpture like the Beauty –, cannot replace engagement with the physical sculptures, but, as I suggested earlier, these are more than simulacra. Simulacra, as a term is often used to describe representations, substitutes for real objects or people, or unsatisfactory imitations in material form. There is much art historical debate around the term, but I suggest that the photographs of Palmyra's material culture are real and material, not merely inferior substitutes for the original. They are certainly not the same and their differing modes of engagement are significant, but the photographs document a different time, place, and cultural context than the sculptures of the ancient past.

Conclusion

It is through this understanding of social memory together with Bourdieu's theory of practice that I see the archive and its uses as critical for remembering Syrian histories. These second and third gazes and so on, cast upon the portraits and the archive folios is part of a larger collective memory that helps to preserve cultural heritage. I would suggest that the gazes cast upon the archive are not solely visual, rather, I see them as an eye and mind connection: an embodied practice. Viewing the archive folios is of course ocular in nature, but as the engagement with the folios draws the viewer in to

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closely examine or lure him or her to return again and again, it becomes ingrained in the viewer and his or her imagination. In turn, this individual engagement with the archive contributes to a larger cultural imaginary that preserves Syria's heritage as the world learns more and more about these magnificent sculptures. The archive folios, following Halbwachs, are both means and repository for memory: memories of Palmyra, memories of excavation, memories of Ingholt, and so on.

It has become ever more interesting now that the archive has taken a digital form. Scanned in its entirety by the Palmyra Portrait project since 2011, Rubina Raja has uploaded the PDFs to her Figshare making them widely accessible[29]. Working with the digital archive is an experience distinct from touching the physical folios, but it is nevertheless engaging. The allure of the sculptures transcends the boundary of the computer screen and the benefits to cultural heritage preservation efforts are manifold. Similarly, the forthcoming publication of the entire corpus, over 4,000 sculptures, by the Palmyra Portrait Project, can aid restitution and recovery efforts as many portraits have gone missing or been destroyed by ISIS. These resources, are, at the surface, simple tools in cultural heritage efforts, but my argument today wishes to emphasize the archive as art object. The dialogue between the portraits and the archive is another layer of intertextuality, in the sense that the archive must be 'read' in the light of its allusions to and differences from the content of the portraits.

A final gaze – for the moment – cast upon the Beauty considers the afterlives of the portrait. As Syrians continue to struggle to reconstruct what has been lost over the past decade, the Beauty endures as a memory of a distant past, that has been documented in the archive, and now revisited by us in the present. Similarly, the archive, though an art object itself, is deeply entangled with the physical portraits, the same but also different as they are of a different time and different cultural context. Certainly, one can view the archive without knowledge of the portraits, especially since many of the portraits recorded in the archive are now lost. Conversely, one can view the portraits without any knowledge of the archive. Yet, the two media are linked through collective memory, each forming, reforming, storing, and promoting our collective memory of Syrian heritage.

29 See note 8 above.

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