

ARCHITECTURES ARCHIVES 1: Concealment/Representation

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This year's Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (SAHGB) Annual Symposium will take the form of a series of four virtual symposia and seminars held between July and October. Run in partnership between the SAHGB, Architectural Association (AA) Archives and Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Collections, we will explore the connections between architecture and archives. The relationship between the two provides a primary interface between architectural history and practice, but has been little explored by either discipline. In four sessions we will ask who is represented (and who is not) in architectural archives, what the role of these repositories is for practice and pedagogy, who they serve, and what their future looks like in the age of BIM and Post-Occupancy Evaluation.

In the first of these sessions we examine representation and concealment in the architectural archive. How do we recover the histories of otherwise invisible actors and agents in the built environment? Traditionally architectural archives and collections privilege the unique authorial genius, normally the design work of a named individual in a particular practice. What we want to explore in this session are marginalised figures or different sorts of labour engaged in the making of the built environment, occupancy of buildings, and discourse.

We also want to understand and interrogate the processes of exclusion - how are 'others' concealed or suppressed in contemporary archival practice? How have 'others' been excluded in historical archival practice? What are the epistemological assumptions of architectural history and archival practice that lead to this exclusion? How can we ensure that archives in the future are more diverse and representative of the various agents we now more commonly acknowledge in the built environment?

We think that this is important because of the ways in which archives and archival practice bound the discipline of architectural history; if we want a more expansive discipline and to engage with innovative methodologies and historiographical questions, we need to open up space for conversations of this kind, scrutinising collections policy and archival practice, as well as the disciplines of architecture and architectural history. In turn this may allow for ever more engaging modes of teaching and practising architecture, architectural history, conservation and heritage.

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<https://www.sahgb.org.uk/whats-on/symposium1>