

Julia Brock and John Q: Wesley Chenault, Andy Ditzler, Joey Orr

History@ Work Q&A

*How did John Q come to be? How did the three of you discover that you shared certain areas of inquiry?*

**Joey:** Wesley Chenault has done an incredible amount of work building queer archives in the city of Atlanta. I worked with him briefly as one of many curators of oral histories for his social history project, *Atlanta's Unspoken Past*, at the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center. This project focused on bolstering weaker areas in the collection, specifically the period just prior to the gay rights movement. My curatorial practice at that time was focused on organizing installations set in the city's transitioning neighborhoods. Soon after, I began training in Visual and Critical Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where there was an emphasis on hybrid methods—scholarship that included some form of creative and critical practice. It was during this time that my archival research and interest in public space began to inform one another.

When I returned to Atlanta in 2009, I wanted to further this practice and to begin looking more closely at how memories might be explored in public places. At this same time, I learned that Andy Ditzler, curator of Atlanta's Film Love series that explores avant-garde film, was looking to address an Atlanta incident from 1969 in which a screening of Andy Warhol's film *Lonesome Cowboys* was interrupted by police. The film was confiscated and audience members were photographed. His plan was to complete the screening on the site of the original theater, allowing the image to fall where it may. This was just the kind of work I was interested in pursuing. Andy and Wesley had also met through the Atlanta History Center, so the three of us convened for a brainstorming session, and we were all interested in the possibilities of a collaborative project. This is how our 2010 series of public interventions, *Memory Flash*, was born.

*Do you see yourselves as each contributing something specific to the collective by playing a unique role (for example, Wesley as professional archivist and historian, Andy as film and sound curator and collector, Joey as curator and visual culture scholar)?*

**Joey:** I believe this is the first time any of us have worked in a collective, and our individual interests definitely complicate the work in productive ways. I am interested in how to generate meaningful research in a context of shared authorship. This happens in the sciences all the time, of course. My specific concerns are about how visual and participatory art practices can be leveraged as methods in the service of intellectual work. I have experience as a curator in public spaces and have been researching socially engaged art recently, as well. Our collective process maintains a level of rigor simply because we are each taking up slight variations on our collective questions, and so the work must be in conversation with several fields simultaneously. Working as a team makes interdisciplinary projects vastly more efficient and enjoyable.

**Wesley:** As an archivist, I am interested in the politics of collection development, especially those related to communities that have been underrepresented or little-documented in cultural institutions and in the art of balancing collection care with promotion and use. These interests partially inform my scholarship on place, identity, and memory, which focuses on Atlanta's queer past. I am not a historian by training; my approach to history is interdisciplinary and reflects my background in psychology, women's studies, and American studies.

Adding to a comment made by Joey about the rigor involved in our creative process, we also have a shared understanding of and appreciation for the research process. Our collaborative work is deeply challenging and rewarding, intellectually and creatively. And, we agreed we'd continue to work as a collective as long as members experience a sense of play, an idea explored explicitly in an installation titled *MondoPotato* that was part of a 2010 group show at Mondo Homo, a queer southern arts festival held in Atlanta. The piece appropriated the Mr. Potato Head toy adding invented and ambiguous parts to a game in which imagination was the only limitation to those who chose to sit and play individually and with others.

**Andy:** I think we're each aware that we bring something different to the collective, but we overlap a lot, too. I don't think of us as playing unique roles; it might be more accurate to say that we approach the same interests from slightly different angles.

*Why an 'idea' collective and not an 'art' collective?*

**Joey:** In the most banal sense, we understand that there is some slippage in our work between public scholarship and public or socially engaged art. I don't think we feel the impulse to shore our work up into one category or another. The intersections of knowledge production and cultural production are one of the things at issue for us. The move to art-as-research underscores that there are connections between art, curating, writing, and otherwise participating, even if at times these connections are ambivalent or otherwise unresolved.

*You frame your work, which engages queer history and politics, as public (and often site-specific) interventions. How and into what are you intervening, and to what end?*

**Joey:** This is a complicated question. The word "intervention" has some associations with the work of historical avant-gardes. In this context, artists attempt to wake people up from a passive state and thus provoke them to participate or to take a more critical view of the world. This view is often associated with a critique of capitalism. I hold a much more open-ended view of potential participants in our work. The learning that takes place in a publicly constructed project is not unidirectional and can never be predicted in advance, so I do not assume our job is to wake people up. I do hope some of our work intervenes in a more street-level, quotidian way into the spaces where people are carrying out their everyday lives. In this way, we sometimes explore something like embodied knowledges. I also hope forms of cultural production can intervene

in the work of cultural preservation as a way of expanding traditional understandings about the relationship of institutions to their audiences.

**Andy:** As Joey suggests, the word “intervention” can have a presumptuous connotation with which I’ve always been uncomfortable. I don’t think any of us see ourselves as “educating the public,” partly because we’re members of the public as much as anyone else, and as much as we’re artists or scholars. We had this idea to present these stories in public and followed that idea to fruition; it became part of a dialogue. I do hope that actions such as *Memory Flash* help people discover or rediscover that life happened in those places we drive and walk past every day. It’s no less a process of discovery for us. I view my own film curating in the same way.

*Joey has said before that John Q explores the idea that archives can function as more than a place of "capture" and that they are capable of a different kind of relation and fluidity—how does your work play with that potential?*

**Joey:** John Q is very much interested in exploring ways in which archival collections can do public work. In his book *Contacts Desired*, historian Martin Meeker describes queer communication practice prior to 1970 thus: “The circulation of information happens in the immediate surroundings of everyday life: on the street, in the church, in the classroom, at the kitchen table, in the lunchroom, on the couch, and under the sheets” (20). I find a related statement by social anthropologist Paul Connerton quite useful here. He states: “A street network becomes what one might call a memorable social text... ‘thick’ in meanings... To devalue street intersections is to devalue civic memory” (26). The beauty of Connerton’s street as a locus for the kind of queer communication Meeker describes is that the memorial is circulated in the dynamic flow of the everyday. In other words, we might imagine that the form of the work both performs an operation of social negotiation and reflects lived histories to heterogeneous publics. Participants may, in turn, take them up or refuse them in ways that are not predetermined, but are themselves the work of social negotiation. This kind of memorial work can explore archival material in a manner that does not shoulder the work of memory onto monuments or other more static forms, but rather posits memory as a link between lived pasts and presents.

**Wesley:** The work of John Q might be seen as a practice of ideas expressed in contemporary writings about archives as active participants in knowledge production and creative endeavors—or to appropriate verbiage coined by scholar Ann Laura Stoler in *Along the Archival Grain*: “archives-as-process” rather than “archives-as-things” (20).

**Andy:** One thing I discovered through co-presenting *Memory Flash* and grappling with Joey’s and Wesley’s ideas on the archive is that archives are not always buildings with printed materials. Our bodies are archives of our memories and sensations; the places we live and work carry traces, material and otherwise, of our presence and activities. A writer was interviewing Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys (yes, a great, great band) and remarked that walking through London

was like walking through his own autobiography. I like that. It gets at one goal of our projects that Joey and Wesley have both mentioned: that people will create new memories of their own through the interaction with other people's stories in public space. Walking through someone else's biography for a moment, we change our own.

*In [Memory Flash](#), in which you recreated or restaged particular historical moments in Atlanta's queer history through performance and installation, how did you choose what stories to tell?*

**Joey:** We have often described our method for selecting the archival memories for that project as registering their *affective resonance*. Some of this is based on Frances Yates's landmark book, *The Art of Memory*. In it, she discusses memory as part of the ancient art of rhetoric and some of the methods used to ensure the persistence of memory. These techniques include creating distinct visual impressions and arousing affective response. These methods make clear that our work is concerned with the complexities of public memory, rather than with strictly setting the record straight. This project also memorialized a historical population that generally did not have access to permanent, secure social space and therefore had to constantly renegotiate the spaces and appearances of their community. We felt this kind of impermanence should also be reflected in some of our scholarly forms.

**Wesley:** It's also the case Andy was already working on the *Lonesome Cowboys* piece prior to the collective. Then, there were aesthetic considerations. We discussed which stories might lend themselves to visual or aural presentation for example. Here, Andy and Joey's backgrounds combined allowed for exhilarating explorations of possibilities. There were also strategic considerations. We looked for stories with the potential to resonate across diverse groups. Having curated an exhibition and co-authored a pictorial history that utilized the same oral histories that we used, I had viewer and reader feedback at hand that provided another level of information for consideration in the selection process.

**Andy:** There was a certain amount of intuition involved. (This might come as close as anything to defining what's "artistic" about our work, since academic scholars and artists have different attitudes to intuition. Scholars tend to proceed from the opposite direction as do artists—establishing a question first and seeking to answer it through research and writing, as opposed to artists who often don't realize what the question is until they've answered it with the artwork.) As soon as Joey told me the story of the Jolly 12—a group of black gay men marching down the streets of the Old Fourth Ward in Atlanta in the early 1960s—the spectacular theatricality of it was apparent. It was the same with the now-forgotten bar on Ponce de Leon Avenue called the Joy Lounge, where drag queens performing in the late '60s had to hide in the walk-in beer cooler when the police came to bust the place. The story is so rife with associations: the beer cooler as the closet, the chill of homophobia, the absurd contrast between the glamor of drag and the dinginess of the surroundings—a playwright could set an

entire play inside that cooler. Our mode of presenting the story was different but nonetheless informed by a sense of theater (as was the original drag show!) and the immediate sense that this was a story worth telling.

*What do these stories and memories become once they leave the archive and are performed for and witnessed by an audience?*

**Wesley:** Elsewhere we've talked about *Memory Flash* as both a remembering and a forgetting. The performances and installations deployed critical and interactive practices in ways that invited participation on the part of attendees to experience and document little-remembered or forgotten moments in Atlanta's queer past, thus, hopefully, creating new memories.

**Joey:** We have also done some thinking about the memory palace, a mnemonic device in which you visualize moving through a space and sequentially depositing information that can be retrieved later by mentally moving through the space again. Since this kind of memory work is tied directly to space, we have thought about the city itself as a memory palace. The idea is that someone who has participated in *Memory Flash*, for example, would remember moments from Atlanta's queer history whenever they pass the sites of our public interventions. In this way, heretofore unknown moments become part of people's experience of the city.

*You've written that your interventions require "public upkeep," suggesting the role of active memory formation on the part of the audience. Are there other ways to upkeep impermanent memorials?*

**Joey:** In his book, *The Texture of Memory*, James Young has suggested that monuments induce forgetting by doing the work of memory for the public. So one suggestion about how to do public upkeep of impermanent memorials is to simply continue doing this kind of work. In their recent book, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of a Queer Past*, one of the things that Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed argue against is precisely this kind of impermanence. They smartly ask if queers really want to leave no mark or trace of their passage through public space. If we take seriously the notion that memory is collective, however, I see no reason not to take its practice seriously, as well. After all, permanent memorials do not necessarily do better work than impermanent ones. The latter might just simply be more explicit about the fact that memorials are inherently contingent in the first place.

Our catalogue for *Memory Flash* was an experiment in how to document the event while continuing our investments in social fluidity and shared authorship. The catalogue took an experimental and multi-modal form in the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia's project space, which is located in their collections space and Education/Resource Center. Installations included photographs and sound works produced by those in attendance. We also exhibited detritus from the events. While we did produce printed matter in the form of a specially-curated issue of *The JOSH* (Journal of Sexual Homos), a New York-based queer zine, we

each individually performed our “catalogue essays” as public programming. Wesley presented a lecture, “The Place of Archives in Theory and Practice,” I organized and chaired a panel, “Art in Research, Research in Art,” and Andy presented a multi-media performance, “Memory, Sound, Performance.” Each of these “essays” then required the same kinds of public remembering and forgetting as the original event being documented. We are, however, interested in being on the record in some capacity. The issue of *The JOSH* we organized, “Remember Me, Forget Me,” is part of MOCA GA’s archives, as well as in the Joan Flasch Artists’ Book Collection at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

*Do you see your work as being in line with other, more conventional memorial customs?*

**Joey:** In her recent book *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop does some historical contextualization of contemporary participatory art. For example, forms of mass spectacle influenced by folk and traditional pageants in Russia influenced reenactments of the storming of the Winter Palace in the years following the October 1917 revolution. We might see these kinds of theatrical social practices, which were intended and received along a rather large spectrum, as precedents for such well-known contemporary examples as artist Jeremy Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave*, in which a particularly violent episode in the 1980s British miners’ strike was reenacted.

Deller is interested in this unresolved moment from the recent past, but also in the popular cultural form of historical reenactment. Our work is necessarily connected to such reenactment schemes, as well. There has been a real proliferation of memorial practices in socially engaged art in the last decade. I imagine the art world will tire of these tactics soon, but they remain ripe with potential for public historians and artist-researchers.

**Andy:** I’d like to draw on some of those conventional memorial customs, not necessarily in their forms, but more in terms of the functions they serve. Those of us who don’t believe in conventional heaven still need places to put our gratitude for being alive, our prayers for the future, and our memories of those we love. I hope that our work would open up a space for people to concoct their own methods of memorializing people, things, and events. I’d like people to be able to think in terms of living their lives as memorials, if they want. Private memory rituals in public spaces.

*Is your work intended to be, implicitly or explicitly, critical of traditional archival and historical practice (wherein archival access is largely a privilege of professionals and historical knowledge is imparted via textual sources and, generally speaking, unified narratives)?*

**Wesley:** I don’t see our work as critical of any traditional practice—archival or historical—as much as it is engaged with contemporary, if not sometimes peripheral, critical discussions and practices. Today there are numerous examples of efforts on the part of cultural institutions to not only demonstrate relevance but also to engage their communities in meaningful and sustainable ways. Here I am

thinking about the idea of participatory culture, which has spread across museums, libraries, and archives, refocusing mission orientations, collections, and services. Crowdsourcing projects and community driven digital archives, just two examples, can be found at institutions ranging from the Library of Congress to the Denver Public Library.

The question itself, however, does reflect a common perception of archives that is persistent as it is outdated and limited. Archives exist in varied private and public settings: community, museum, religious, corporate, non-profit, government, and college and university archives. Access is more complex than professional privilege. Some archives are closed to the public, others have a public service mandate. Some are well-funded and amply staffed, while others are small operations that rely on volunteers. In the case of the latter, limited resources might mean restricted hours or by-appointment-only visits. The majority of archives in the public sector serve broad patron bases, which might include K-12 teachers and students, amateur genealogists, general interest researchers, and more specialized users. The recent outcry of citizens, professional organizations, and others over attempts to close the Georgia State Archives, for example, illustrates this point and demonstrates the role archives play in broad issues ranging from government transparency to litigation to family history to elementary school curriculum.

**Joey:** My experience in this collective has transformed my work on this count. I came to this collaboration with a good deal of experience with cultural criticism, but knowing very little about the actual practices of professional archivists. Having an archivist in our midst has made me not only more sensitive to a different set of practices, but it has also made me more careful and deliberate in my interdisciplinary writing and thinking. I definitely see our work as existing partially in the sphere of cultural criticism, but by “criticism” I mean a form of intellectual work and careful consideration carried out in the spirit of shared inquiry. There are two texts that always come to mind when I visit an archive. One is Allan Sekula’s essay, “The Body and the Archive,” in which he explores nineteenth and early twentieth century police archival methods as “juridical photographic realism” (5). Exploring photographic capture in some of its most radical forms, he investigates archival systems that supported early efforts in criminology and physiognomy. This is, of course, an extreme framework, but I like to give myself a good scare before visiting collections to remind myself that power is at work.

The other figure in cultural criticism that is always with me, of course, is Michel Foucault who was always concerned with the violence and absences caused by archival and other medical and legal practices. What I carry with me most during my visits is his idea that the archives produce *us*. In other words, there is a way in which the proliferation of recuperative collecting efforts supports particular kinds of identity constructions. My presence in these spaces is therefore an effect of these disciplinary models. I am, in a sense, called forth by the ways I am articulated. For all of these reasons, I maintain an intellectual commitment to exploring personal connection as a way of mapping the past.

**Andy:** We've talked in terms of "opening up" the archive into public space with the implication that archives are within us as well as in the files inside that sometimes inaccessible building. That archive within people, including that within our own bodies, can be equally difficult to access. It all needs to be more open. As for narrative, that is a much larger issue than just the archive. Stories are essential and they can open up people's experiences in crucial ways, but as a form they can also box us in. Having been involved with avant-garde film for awhile, I've become aware of how often film—an inherently visual medium—gets routed into literary and theatrical forms of narrative, foreclosing much of what cinema can do. The centrality of storytelling in culture is something I think about a lot. We do tell stories in John Q, but I am concerned about the potential violence that neatly enclosed stories can do to the subject, the work, and the audience. And I am always trying to understand the difference between this and the ways stories help us bring out our experiences. In this way, I hope that our work reflects thinking about the form of narrative as well as that of history.

*Should public works such as Memory Flash be included in the formal historiography of queer life and politics in the South?*

**Joey:** Absolutely. Of course *how* art practices might fit into a "formal historiography" is at issue. In the logistical sense of collecting literature that deals with particular histories, for example, citing a collaborative artwork does not track information in the same manner (this author made this claim at this time in this context). In this sense, what is captured seems markedly intuitive and subjective.

A historiography concerned with theories and methods, however, might be very interested in the relation of our work to that of other social and public historians. Putting our work in relation to more formal historiographical work pressures our inquiry in all of the right places. This is where art methods and other professional methods butt up against one another. In my opinion, areas of troubled epistemology are not inconvenient aggravations to be ironed out, but rather creative opportunities to deal with issues of discipline and knowledge production more generally.

*Your work puts much emphasis on process and co-discovery between the collective and public audiences. Can you speak a bit more to this priority?*

**Joey:** In this respect I have been influenced by a mentor, the late Ivan Karp. Dr. Karp published a helpful essay in 2001 titled "Public Scholarship as Vocation." In it, he holds forth that a significant aspect of public scholarship is "producing and disseminating knowledge across a cultural and social boundary" (77). While writing, thinking, and project work in general can often be more efficiently produced working alone, in my experience collaborations particularly focused on public work have often resulted in leaving behind worries about authorship and investing energies into exploring the most urgent questions as they arise. There is a sense in which one is generous to one's audience by trying to make engaging work, but it is equally important to realize that the work itself is transformed by way of its filtering through a public situation. Access is always an issue when



producing knowledges in art, academic, archival, and other institutional contexts. Methods for public scholarship and socially engaged research do not, of course, eradicate these issues, but they might create new possibilities for participation in formulating our shared past.

*What were the results of that shared discovery in your recent talks at the [Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center](#), in which the GLBT Historical Society sent archival boxes (filled with copies of original materials) that you opened along with the active participation of the audience?*

**Joey:** Most importantly for me, it took a step in the research process that is generally very solitary, like a visit to an archival collection in which you sign in and sit quietly at a table, and made it explicitly public. At the moment and as a case in point, the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center has a picture of participants looking into the archive box posted on their SUPPORT web page (<http://thecontemporary.org/support/membership/>). That representation is an important foray into institutional reimaging. It's a membership page, but what it captures visually is what artist Allan Kaprow called the elimination of the audience. In other words, we weren't performing for an audience, but rather those present were an integral part of the work. Since I am particularly interested in how different practices produce various kinds of knowledges, might socially engaged research practices in this context produce different kinds of questions about history, memory, and collaboration more generally? These talks not only resulted in helpful frameworks for thinking through our own work, but also fostered relationships with other artists, administrators, scholars, critics, and students.

When doing this kind of work with a public, you extend the purview of your collaborative goals to include a great many other voices. This can at times confuse the process or even be unproductive. And this has happened to us, too. I have joked that it might take a certain kind of constitution to engage in work you know in advance might fail. But many scholars in the digital humanities are opening their processes up to peers.

In the case of our public panel at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, however, this was not just a matter of sharing knowledge, but also a way of including aspects of interaffectivity with the real presence of others. This is not meant as strictly phenomenological. Much, though admittedly not all, socially engaged art foregrounds the social as a way of avoiding the commodification of the object or artist. If we understand the commodity in the Marxist sense of having the history of its production obscured, then there is a sense in which foregrounding the social means to mend a rift between the past and present. This is a theoretical layer of memory work that I am interested in following

*What role does historical coincidence or chance play in your process?*

**Joey:** Chance necessarily plays a big role. After all of the research, work, and planning that went into *Memory Flash*, the day of the event we were all very

relaxed because there was a sense in which a lot of our work was done. We had set up opportunities for participants to encounter a series of memories, but the reception and circulation of the work was just beginning to unfold. Something we discovered very early on in our work was that what we intend is not always predictive of the work's various receptions. Even how the work lives on is beyond our control. Months after *Memory Flash* we encountered one of the memories from the project memorialized in a mural of Atlanta's queer family tree. None of us knew the artist.

**Wesley:** Since much of our work derives from archival research, chance plays a rather important role. There is a discovery process that often leads to unexpected encounters, frustrates intentions, or causes an emotional response. This is especially true as we delve into our next project, since many of the collections we use are "unprocessed," meaning there might be little to no descriptive information about the materials or no arrangement or inherent order. There are things we hope to find—an article, an image, a link, something that affects us or simply provides evidence to support or illustrate an idea. Then, as we review unsorted boxes and files, there are moments when we come across materials that shift inquiry, counter an assumption, or lead to another clue.

*For Wesley: Has the work of John Q changed your thinking about or approach to archival and historical practice?*

**Wesley:** I come to John Q as an archivist and interdisciplinary scholar invested in the notion that archives are generative sites of new knowledge and creative works, whatever form they may take—a monograph, a conceptual art installation, a student show, a familiar historical exhibition, an underground zine, a law, a patent, and more. Working with Joey and Andy has enriched my thinking in general through an exposure to different fields of thought and practice. Certainly our collaboration has provided a broadened vantage point from which to consider the gaps and occasional overlaps in literature *about* archives from a spectrum of artists, archivists, and humanists. How the collective affects my day-to-day professional practice or individual scholarly output, however, is something I might not fully grasp or realize for some time.

*For Andy: When documenting, through sound and video, the public works of John Q, are you consciously creating an archive of the collective?*

**Andy:** I've tried to approach the documenting that I've done of John Q as an "auto-archive." That is, it's an archive we create of our own activities, consisting of materials that demonstrate a certain self-reflexivity about their status as documents.

The documents from which historians have, in a sense, created queer history were consciously preserved and collected *within* the queer community, not from without. Queer archiving was from the beginning an act of self-archiving as a method of survival. To some extent, I see the documenting of our work in line with that tradition. Now that the arc of queer archiving bends toward the

institution—research university library collections as opposed to the personal and community-based archives where this activity began—it is even more important to consider what it means to create an archive of queer activity.

But what does it mean to document work like John Q's, that already seeks to unsettle notions of history and the archive? Following from John Cage and various conceptual artists, I think of the documenting I do as working across different modes. Certainly one of these modes is a standard archiving that preserves the facts of John Q—when we met, what we did. But we also have the choice to make documents that are more about generating ideas and questions than providing a historical account. These can take forms different from those that traditionally look like historical documents: sound recordings instead of photographs, videos instead of written words. For example, I documented the *Memory Flash* event in sound by wearing microphones in each ear and keeping the recorder running whether or not I was in proximity to the action. The resulting recording alternates quiet, interstitial moments with the sounds of the *Memory Flash* events. (Conceptually, this recording thus draws on Cage's sense of silence not as the absence of sound but as nonintention.) A concise overarching narrative of *Memory Flash*, such as one a standard documentary film might provide, would place it in a linear context of queer history or public art; whereas the actual event had a pleasingly unruly relationship to the archive, a certain ephemerality which I was more intrigued to preserve. My sound document sidesteps the responsibility of providing an accurate historical account in favor of one that inspires further questions about the event, and perhaps even different projects or ideas having nothing to do with *Memory Flash* or John Q. My hope is that this method of auto-archiving provides one model for alternative practices of archiving and the knowledge these practices can produce.

*What pasts are visible or knowable to artists, or those working in artistic mediums, that historians or archivists cannot (or do not) access?*

**Joey:** Their own, perhaps. We know that archival practices themselves influence the reception and legibility of material culture. This is but one phase in what social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has called “the social life of things.” As a researcher, of course, I very much depend on material culture passing through this phase in which a public service exists to provide me with access rather than interpretation, per se. Since I am acting as an artist-researcher and not strictly as a historian or archivist, however, I have the latitude to follow my own intuitions. While my work has to make reasonable connections to the texts and contexts I am interested in exploring, I am not bound to the methodologies of any one discipline. This is a unique opportunity in which public scholars and researchers can explore things like *affective resonance*, for example, something that might appear too biased or idiosyncratic for the very different goals of other kinds of professional and intellectual labor.

*Memory Flash* received Honorable Mention for the Allan Bérubé Award, given by the Committee on LGBT History of the American Historical Association. Have there been other reactions to your work by historians or public historians?

**Wesley:** After *Memory Flash*, we sought opportunities to present at conferences and accepted offers for speaking engagements, as a collective and individually, but mostly in academic settings. Scholars and artists of various backgrounds have responded with interest, curiosity, and constructive criticism. The honorable mention, to my knowledge, is the most formal response we've received from historians to date, though *Memory Flash* reached a broader audience through a review in *Public Art Review*, a leading publication on contemporary public art, and a feature in the recently published *Noplacelessness: Art in a Post-Urban Landscape*.

**Joey:** It's true that most of our activity circulates in the context of contemporary art. We've been funded by Artadia: The Fund for Art and Dialogue in New York and worked on different projects with the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Flux Projects, and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia. We also published a collective essay in Emory University's online journal, [Southern Spaces](#). In terms of public history, we collaborated with San Francisco-based artists on a performative panel at the GLBT History Museum. As part of the National Queer Arts Festival, this panel drew a mix of academics, historians, and artists.

*How did your collaboration begin with the GLBT Historical Society? How has it shaped ongoing projects?*

**Joey:** The GLBT Historical Society opened the GLBT History Museum just a couple of years ago. Claiming to be the first of its kind in the U.S., this caught our attention. After all, possibilities of visual and other art tactics become administratively easier to negotiate in spaces of display. We were very soon introduced to the Historical Society's artist-in-residence, EG Crichton. Her work with the *Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archives* project was a real model for how we believe cultural production can have great currency for institutions invested in cultural preservation.

Our work with the GLBT Historical Society has been partially a matter of research resources and partly a way to begin collaboration with EG, as well as other San Francisco-based artists, including Rudy Lemcke and Barbara McBane. Various combinations of us have participated in panels at the GLBT History Museum and the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center.

We continue to be in conversation with these artists. They are not only important resources in our connection to another community, but their thinking and opinions, as well as their own individual projects, continue to enrich our own thinking and work. Readers may be specifically interested in Rudy Lemcke's multimedia fictional archive, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies* (<http://rudylemcke.com/the-search-for-life/>). Wesley and I have both participated in EG Crichton's *Wandering Archives* project, and we are also always open to the

possibility of future collaborative projects as these seem interesting and productive. We hope there is more to come on that front.