

George Brecht: [Air Conditioning from Water Yam](#), 1963: Offset card from cardboard box with offset label, containing sixty-nine offset cards. Used by research archivist Harald Østgaard Lund incorporated into an invitation to a house-warming party, in a house from 1963. W/John Cage, «Variation IV».

In an issue of *Arr* (3-4 2022), Harald Østgaard Lund published an essay on a print—featuring the panic-stricken and famished boy Illarion Nishchenko in a tub (below)—that the National Library of Norway (NLN) has in its keep: *no-nb\_blds\_01867* (photographer: unknown). The text can be read as an essay contributing to the history of ideas. Title: *A horror picture —A photograph from Ukraine 1922-2022*. From an archival vantage point (the author is a research-archivist), the essay could be read as an *accession document*: compiling and discussing its provenance (1922-2022) with a cartographic cogency that resembles a map.

The picture is found in an album kept by Vidkun Quisling. Under the photo, in his handwriting, he states: “has killed and eaten his brother.” (Alb. 240 “V. Quisling” NLN). Quisling was a member of the Nansen outreach Delegation, which in real time as a *proxy* public consciousness responding to the famine in Ukraine caused by Stalin’s rule. According to the archive of the *Ukrainian Red Cross* in Geneva, however, its report differs from Quisling’s on certain important points: here, it is related that Illarion’s mother killed two of the weakest siblings, to feed the other stronger ones. Here the boy is a cannibal, but he is not a killer.

Vidkun Quisling, however, was the first venturing to publish the picture in 1922, and prompt the lateral drift of its semantics from then to our time: up to the publication of the essay in *Arr*. If seen as an accession document the essay becomes adjoined to the archival entry. This possibility is of interest here because it brings to awareness *two* criteria that are essential to an archival element as such: that is *declared* and can be *cited*. The troubling aspects of the picture—beyond its ghoulish contents—is that which is undeclared: we do not know if it was taken by a member of the Delegation, the Ukrainian Red Cross, or someone else. We do not know.



Photo of famished boy—Illarion Nishchenko—in Ukraine 1922. Photo: unknown photographer/no-nb\_blds\_01867

If taken by a Nansen delegation member, we do not know if other members of the delegation were present to witness the shot. With regard to *citability*: what is the range of reproduction—both in numbers and *reproduction*—before it ceases to be a *photograph*? Or, more precisely what is the interval *p/-p* within which the photograph has a *documentary* value? The kind of *deconstruction* that Harald Østgaard Lund has in his portfolio yields the type of archival information needed to discuss such questions: it is the Ariadne-thread of his errands with the photo of Amundsen arrival at the South Pole, the photo of deportation of Norwegian Jews on board of the ship *Donau* 26th november 1942, the photo of a briefcase used as evidence against Arne Treholt who was accused of espionage for the Soviet Union (he was sentenced to 20 years prison in 1985), and finally the picture of Illarion Nishchenko from 1922. He has been accessing about 1 photo each year.

So, there are *more*. The declaration of undeclared elements in

the archive material of which he is a specialist—himself a photographer, film-maker and an artist—and the importance of the reproduction and edition on the *semantics* of citation, is concerned with aspects of the modern mind: what is the range of *concern* within an interval **p/-p**: with *indifference* at one end, and *gloating* at the other extreme. Indeed, what is the nature of the “buffer-zone” where concern articulates, or alternatively degenerates in the one or the other direction? Harald Østgaard Lund is specialist of this. How we level the reality of what is photographed with the reality of photography (in un/declared aspects).

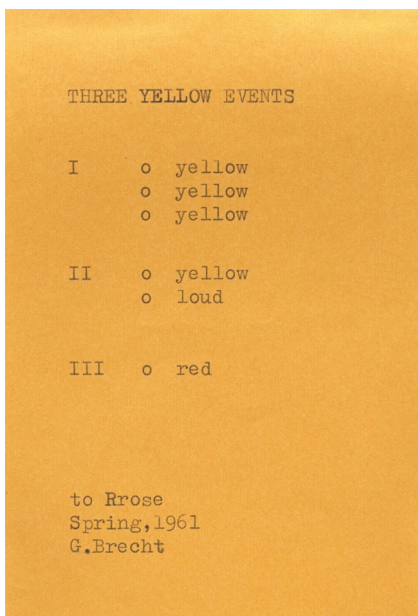
Could we, for instance, follow the injunction of George Brecht’s installation (AIR conditioning), and move [through the place](#): **a)** on site in Ukraine with Illarion Nishchenko in the tub; **b)** a space in which the picture is exhibited as a photo; **c)** a temporary autonomous zone [TAZ] in which the picture has deteriorated into an image/meme? We can move through and catch [the air](#), or atmosphere and still express/articulate concern. But how do we now that we are not fundamentally indifferent and/or secretly ghoulish? These are the questions of modernism in modern photography. The enslaving testimonial power of photography.

Of course, we may ask whether *this* photo was modern—in the sense of testimonial—or whether we still are within the scope of reproduction in the *romantic* era (where photo would level e.g. with drawing as recordings)? Then we would be dealing with only reproduction, and would be more tuned to how pictorial materials are *declared*: for instance, manuscripts with a *diary* record to access the *pictorial* record. The NLN seminars on geologist B.M. Keilhau’s Mountain journey with his friend C.P.B. Boeck, in 1820 (gifted to Boeck in 1821. [Ms.plv. 1247](#)). Assignment & application: the articulate personal and technical prerogatives.

If we accept that the *documentary* interval corresponds with the interval of *concern*, it is the non-repetitive aspects of the material’s semantics that saves from habit (whether *immune* or *addictive*). For instance, the assignment of the geologist on a field-survey, would have changed during B.M. Keilhau’s career: what was the assignment of the geologist as seen by his successor Theodor Kjerulf. We also see a lateral drift of what is *citable*: the articles on *empirical* research Keilhau published in Scotland, would have not have been citation-worthy without his international *exhibit* that was applauded by geologists as Leopold von Buch.

The lateral drift of assignments and applications is of core interest to the archivist. And the nature of the *accession document*—of which we are speaking hypothetically—would be an archival match of constitutional rules: indeed, what the accession document does is to provide the materials *not only* with an as complete provenance as possible, but the *constitution* of the archival material (in a determination between the medical and legal sense of constitution). It can also be compared to Klein’s [special entity](#) needed to see an archival material as ‘a group of transformations’. A group timed on its own terms.

Which means that instead of materials *present* in lateral drift on *time-local* assumptions, the archive offers a *layout* of materials *transforming* e.g. from 1922-2022, *set by applying* of what is known through the accession-document, *on the profile* of the original assignment: i.e., the profile of declared and undeclared elements that describes the *task* and *occasion* of a photo, making it appear as a *specific* encounter (as played out by declared and undeclared elements *behind* and *before* the camera). And *precisions* according to correspondences mapped between application (technical) & assignment (personal) of the original in combination: i.e. the *mediation*. Featuring an alignment of *personal*, *technical* and *medial* levels.



George Brecht: *Three yellow events*, 1961, installation. The 3 repetitions of *yellow* in I applied in the sequence I, II, III. Assigned with a reference to Rose (Duchamp’s pseudonym as an X-dresser).

An example that clarifies the difference between application and assignment: an assignment given to a [ChatGPT](#) bot will yield an output, which in turn will have to be applied. For instance, what are the small/big *changes* needed for the output to be published with assigner’s name on it? And can the changes that the assigner made to match/level with the proposal, be *accounted* for? Perhaps George Brecht’s work *Three yellow events* (1961) could be viewed as a *self-accession* document. The paper is yellow: so the marks I, II and III would mark yellow anyhow. Yet, they also pick up on 3 *instances* of yellow in I: **loud** in II, and **red** in III (on yellow paper). The assignment of three yellow events in I are then applied in I-III. *Same-same but different*. Then the whole thing is assigned to Rose: that is, [Rose Sélavy](#) which is Marcel Duchamp’s name as a cross-dresser. The application & assignment differ, but they *level*. This sort of levelling is a *function* of the accession document. Will we in the future see a growing importance of *accession documents* (not only among specialised archivists but in what is proposed in *general education*)? Self-accession, as a future challenge.