

produced work which coalesces in different ways around a nagging conviction that forgetting and myopia are at the centre of the new political dispensation in Northern Ireland. The archive, used as an anchoring principle in each project, gives a gravitational centre to their work.

Ursula Burke and Daniel Jewesbury, in their exhibition *Archive: Lisburn Road* (2004), wish to see Belfast in a way which circumvents the 'ideologically-encrusted images on TV and in movies, in art and photojournalism'.¹² *Archive: Lisburn Road* exhibits a practice which is close to a photographic social anthropology. It focuses on the material culture of Belfast's Lisburn Road and the residential areas which cling to it along its east side (an area which has long been the epitome of Belfast's bourgeois culture). Throughout the Troubles (and indeed previously) the specific concentration of respectability in this one area has been a kind of reproach to the rest of the city. Its implication that living a 'non-sectarian' life is a pleasure granted by prosperity, led Maurice Goldring, writing in 1991, to announce the coming death of Belfast's secluded class arbour:

In Belfast [the] liberal intelligentsia, concentrated in the south of the city, along the Malone and Lisburn Roads, no longer knows what the people think. Protected but weakened by their privileges, they no longer deserve to lead the country.¹³

When Goldring wrote this, the first stirrings of a new Belfast were already apparent. When that transformed Belfast came, after the ceasefires and the Agreement, it left the Lisburn Road trailing in its wake, a faded snapshot in the city's family album.

Burke and Jewesbury consciously deploy the archive form in this project, knowing the problems this may bring:

The form of the 'archive' is increasingly being used by artists and curators, as a container for a range of critical devices. Often it is employed at an ironic distance, a means by which to 'critique' the practices of anthropology, or ethnography, or colonialism, or museology'.¹⁴

In denying their work an 'ironic critique', a 'pre-ordained, unvariable formal style', and an 'arbitrarily selected content', Burke and Jewesbury adopt an anti-auteur approach. *Archive: Lisburn Road* maintains a faith in 'the breadth of a genuine archive',¹⁵ and believes that by adding a forgotten part of the city of Belfast to the city's own archive, a broader collective sense of what is possible in representing the city will emerge. In this sense then, *Archive: Lisburn Road* believes that the universal archive of Belfast can be altered, critically, from within.

In *Archive: Lisburn Road*, the singularity the Lisburn Road and its people is on show. And Burke and Jewesbury's photographs reveal that being on show or being hidden are the two modes by which the area binds together its residential and commercial functions. There is an extreme contrast between the

Ursula Burke and Daniel Jewesbury
Untitled
2004
From the series *Archive: Lisburn Road*.
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Courtesy of the artists.



foreclosure of private space and the scopic nature of the commercial strip which runs along the west side of the road. This yin and yang of home and shopping is made whole through lifestyle, promenading and shopping. Window displays are widening in the images in *Archive: Lisburn Road*, like the eyes looking in on them. Obsessed with looking, the Lisburn Road cries out to be photographed. Jewesbury and Burke close in on the visually claustrophobic world of this paranoid spectacle.

Burke and Jewesbury expand the photographic archive of Belfast by adding images of publicity-shy suburban houses which shield themselves with verdure. Ground-floor interiors are hidden away as places of secret interiority where life remains a mystery. The garden is a kind of *cordon sanitaire*, and the dense, matted hedges refuse to let a gaze pass through them. Amongst the shops on the Lisburn Road there has arisen a new vernacular architecture. Front window frames expand to the size of the original house, and their materials imply that they have shaken off the legacy of red-brick and sash window. In the midst of this denial and reassertion of the Belfast origins of shops selling designer drama, Burke and Jewesbury register signs of the collapse of the style of bourgeois life which holds the two sides of the road together. Burke and Jewesbury's 'archive' has a strong sense of the historical accretion which makes the Lisburn Road, but it also knows that the Lisburn Road is close to being outmoded, becoming an anachronism. It is a quaint version of a future Belfast that was never going to happen.

Having photographed a virtual Northern Ireland in *Red Land Blue Land*, Claudio Hils came to work in Belfast to make *Archive_Belfast* in 2004. *Archive_Belfast* does not make an archive of the city. It photographs the city's archives, from the official to the marginal. Thus there are images of the storerooms and forgotten treasures of organizations such as the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the People's Museum (a museum of the Shankill Road), the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Historical Society, and the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. Hils carefully researched and constructed a semi-underground material existence for the leftovers of the Troubles, places where the cultural artefacts of the conflict are squirreled away out of sight of the new Northern Ireland which was emerging out of the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century. These are museums or rooms which are either rarely visited or falling into disuse. Yet the fact of their continued existence (and their new status as photographs) means that their significance is not entirely washed away. *Archive_Belfast* asks whether Belfast can be archived, whether its multitudinousness and the depth of its 'troubles' can be classified and contained. The haunting photographs of rooms and X-rays from the Royal Victoria Hospital are reminders of real pain (something which cannot be archived) in a time of peace.

The tradition of museumizing the photograph by taking photographs of museum pieces has a long history that goes back most famously to Roger Fenton's beautiful images of the British Museum in the 1850s. Several of Fenton's photographs, particularly his 1857 'Gallery of Antiquities',¹⁶ are formally echoed in Hils's photographs of the storeroom of the X-ray Department of the Royal Victoria Hospital, the Newspaper Archive at Belfast City Library, and the 'Evidential Video-Tape Archive' at Musgrave Street Police Station (three images which come as a group within the series). Fenton's British Museum photographs were contentious for the very reason that they might allow, as Fox Talbot suggested in *The*