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Memorabilia. Collecting Sounds with... is a new series from Ràdio Web MACBA that seeks to break through to unearth and reveal private collections of music and sound *memorabilia*. The documentary series is being presented this spring at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) in a prospective conference/listening format, where four collectors have been invited to share the concerns and particular characteristics that have driven them to build their personal collections. This is a historiography of sound collecting that reveals the unseen and passionate work of the amateur collector while reconstructing multiple parallel histories such as the evolution of recording formats, archival issues, the sound collecting market and the evolution of musical styles beyond the marketplace.

Kenneth Goldsmith was invited to the *Memorabilia. Collecting Sounds with...* to give a lecture on his sound collection, which took place on April 20, 2012 at the MACBA.

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Publishers Weekly described the writings of Kenneth Goldsmith as 'some of the most exhaustive and beautiful collage work yet produced in poetry'. Goldsmith is the author of ten books of poetry and teaches at the Centre for Programs in Contemporary Writing at University of Pennsylvania, where he is also senior editor of the online poetry archive PennSound. Goldsmith is also the founding editor of the online archive UbuWeb (ubu.com), a universal source of reference for avant-garde art on the Internet. An underground project that has no institutional backing or budget of any kind, UbuWeb is an exhaustive and also personal repository that reflects the tastes, quirks and obsessions of its creator. A compulsive digital collector, Goldsmith's personal archive extends far beyond the in itself unfathomable UbuWeb. www.ubu.com

MEMORABILIA. COLLECTING SOUNDS WITH...

Kenneth Goldsmith's lecture transcript

01. From collector to archivist: seven thoughts

Audio: Benjamina Gigli 'Mi par d'udir ancora', from Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*. Recorded in London, 1931. From the CD *Benjamina Gigli, Historical Recordings (1927-1951)*, Gala Records, 1990.

Put simply, this is the most beautiful recording I own.

Thought Number 1

A receipt buried in my crumbling paperback copy of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* shows that during his lunch hour on September 9, 1965, my grandfather – presumably in an alcoholic haze and definitely packing a concealed .45 caliber pistol – stumbled into Doubleday Books on Fifth Avenue and purchased this very book. As evidenced by the spatters of grease and clods of dried ketchup on the first few pages, he took the book to a nearby luncheonette and, perched on a stool over a cheeseburger deluxe, began reading it. The trail of foodstuff throughout the book – including spilled scotch and tobacco stains – belies the fact that he actually *read* the damn thing, arguably the most difficult book ever written in English. The lunchtime pleasures of oblique modernist literature – combined with a steady intake of booze – provided much needed respite from his daily grind of extracting overdue rents from deadbeat Hell's Kitchen slum dwellers.

In the fifties, he was an up-and-coming lawyer. His style was that of the casual British dandy, a look shared by American jazz musicians of the day. Glance at the cover of Miles Davis' *Milestones* or, in a dressier way, *My Funny Valentine*, and you'll recognize it immediately: loose fitting – but immaculately tailored – long-collared cotton shirts, tight black trousers, small-lapel navy blazers, and black and white polka dotted ties; crumpled yet precise, striving yet understated. Unlike today's bulldog media-soaked, polyester-clad litigators, many mid-century New York City lawyers prided themselves on being intellectuals. Products of boarding schools, they were weaned on the classics, and, in a way, they considered law their day job; after five, with cocktail in hand, their real passion was their library, which was built up slowly and carefully. It was a status symbol, one which bespoke privilege and cultivation. My grandfather was so meticulous that he created a typewritten card catalogue, which he kept in a series of cardboard boxes. No one used nor saw it; it was for his eyes only, a private index for a private library.

His living room décor was floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, crammed with the hardbound editions of the classics. When the money was flowing, he'd splurge on thirties era Golden Cockerel Press editions. His pride was Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* illustrated with flowing Art Nouveau line drawings by the famed typographer Eric Gill. Printed on handmade paper, today a set goes for over \$10,000. But these were more for show, too precious and valuable to even handle, let alone read. For everyday use, he took a subscription to the Limited Editions Club, which provided high-quality, affordable books that made up the bulk of his library. Oftentimes, a contemporary artist would be paired with an author; my favorite is an edition of Dante's *Inferno*, illustrated by George Grosz.

Things were going swimmingly for him in the mid-fifties. He was making a good salary, able to buy his books, and raise his family in a rich and cultured environment. And he was making a great return from his earnings, all of which he poured into the Cuban sugar fields. That is, until Fulgencio Batista boarded a plane in the early hours of January 1, 1959, and fled to the Dominican Republic.



[Kenneth Goldsmith, 2012. Photo: Gemma Planell]

From that moment on, my grandfather's life was a downward spiral. His self-worth shattered and completely broke, he began drinking heavily, which resulted in him losing his job at the law firm. Casting about in the early sixties for a job, he ended up at a two-bit agency as a rent collector. His family went down the tubes with him as he endured a never-ending nightmarish series of incidents involving drugs, guns, prostitution, robberies, overdoses, and suicides. Yet no matter how poor he became or desperate things got, he never sold his books. His library was his last toehold to the life of cultivation which had long since slipped from him. In his last days, I recall a man of elegance with his sixties era Brooks Brothers navy-blue blazer with gold buttons, a Lacoste shirt, perfectly fitting Levi's, and tennis shoes, puffing on his pipe, sitting silently in the late afternoon New York sun. But on closer inspection, the blazer was stained, the shirt moth-eaten, and his toes were protruding from his threadbare shoes.

After he died, I inherited his books. Since I was a child, I was entranced by them, having spent hours leafing through oversized tomes on his living room carpeting, breathing in the thick, smoky Borkum Riff-infused air which filtered through the oblique New York sunlight. And since no one else in the family was interested, they became mine. But a funny thing happened when I went to box up the library. Stuffed in a cabinet behind some ancient glassware, I discovered a sub-library of risqué books that I had never seen before. It was like coming upon your father's stash of porn mags, but in this case, it was literary erotica and difficult modernism. I consulted his card catalog and there was no sign of them. Leafing through them, I found many to be illegal, even dangerous to possess. For instance, there was a 1954 pamphlet of *The Communist Manifesto*, published the year McCarthy himself was heading the Senate Subcommittee on Communist influence. Or a 1933 French edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the back jacket emblazoned with the sternly-worded warning: 'NOT TO BE INTRODUCED INTO THE BRITISH EMPIRE OR THE USA', an admonition shared by several forties Henry Miller titles in his collection, published by the outré Paris-based Obelisk Press. I uncovered the very first English edition of De Sade's *Justine*, printed in 1931 by the Risus Press, which contains the following disclaimer: 'Note: The editor, an amiable old gentleman devoted to hearth and home, living in the bosom of a happy family, highly disapproves of most of the characters in this novel; and in no way can he identify himself with their words or actions.' And then there was a boxed set of the anonymously-penned Victorian erotica epic, *My Secret Life*, which is nothing but 5,000 pages of non-stop sex. But my very favorite is a little brown book published in 1932 called *On Going Naked* by Jan Gay, who in real life was Helen Reitman, a pioneer in gay and lesbian studies. It's a world tour of nudist colonies that begins: 'the author has for years taken pleasure in going without clothes whenever temperature and circumstance were propitious.' But best of all, of course, are the black and white photos, which are a cross between Leni Riefenstahl and National Geographic, depicting every possible variant of nudism (including children), all with their genitalia scrubbed out. Oddly enough, this book not only contains the stamp telling us that it belonged to the library of Philip L. Field, but also inscribed in ancient cursive is 'This book belongs to Rosalind von Finkelstein,' my grandmother bearing the family's pre-Anglicized name. How strange. Both my grandparents shared a book on nudism. I had no idea.

I have no clue as to where, why, or how these books came to be a part of his secret library. There's no trace anywhere of trips to Europe from where they may have been smuggled, no receipts from underground bookstores, no plain-brown paper postal service wrappers bearing arcane P.O. boxes. Nothing. Today, while most of the Limited Editions Club classics sit in storage, it's this variant strain that is proudly on display on the bookshelves in my loft.

My grandfather was hardcore to the end. In the early nineties, immersed in my own explorations of difficult modernist literature, I made the mistake of expressing my enthusiasm for Ezra Pound in his presence. A few days later, a note arrived in the mail: 'Dear Ken: Re: Ezra Pound. You may have missed the enclosed. Old Ez was not a very nice person and his poetry stinks=stank. Love, Grandpa.'

Audio: Charles Bernstein, '1-100', from the cassette *Class*. Recorded in 1969. Unreleased.



An early conceptual work by America's most important poet associated with the Language movement. Make sure you listen to the very end.

Thought Number 2

My grandfather's collection made me into a collector. But since he did books, I did records. It began with The Beatles when I was a kid. When I was a teenager, I loved Black Sabbath and sold all my Beatles records. When I became a hippy, I loved the Grateful Dead and sold all my Black Sabbath records. When I became a punk, I loved the Sex Pistols and sold all my Grateful Dead records. When I became an avant-gardist, I loved John Cage and sold all my Sex Pistols records. I never sold my John Cage records, but eventually I went and bought back all my Beatles, Black Sabbath, Grateful Dead and Sex Pistols records. I learned late in the game that a collector should never sell anything, for all acquisitions constitute a personal history, a way to trace one's intellectual life.

Audio: Coyle and Sharpe, 'Edges'. Recorded on KGO Radio, San Francisco, early sixties. Unreleased.

This man on the street interview duo were the precursors to Sacha Baron Cohen, spoofing innocent passersby in the most absurd and preposterous way. This is their most metaphysical effort.

Thought Number 3

My obsessions with the accumulation of artifacts constituting a life lead me down roads I normally wouldn't have gone. In the mid-nineties, I became a music critic for a prominent alternative New York City newspaper as a way to be able to obtain the records I most wanted but could not afford. I wrote letters to every small record label I could think of saying that I was in the position of writing about obscure music in the world's largest media market. The discs started streaming into my mailbox. Some days, up to 100 CDs from small experimental labels would arrive. Often, the boxes would contain a label's entire output, netting me on occasion hundreds of amazing discs.

When I would travel abroad, I would make appointments in advance with record labels and artists. Yes, I did write about them, but just as important, I would arrive home with an extra suitcase stuffed with very pricey import discs. On one trip to London, I was allowed to literally take as much as I wanted from the warehouse of one of the oldest and most important labels, which also doubled as a distribution service for many great small labels. It was a dream.

As mercenary as this all sounds, I did write dozens of feature articles and reviews of small label experimental works in the Press, giving these artists coverage they never would've otherwise received in the New York market. So it was a win-win situation: the labels ended up getting press and my collecting addiction ended up getting its fix.

Audio: Kelly Mark, 'I Really Should' (excerpt). Recorded 2002, self-released CD.

An hour-long list of things that Kelly Mark, a Canadian artist, should really do.

Thought Number 4

By the mid-nineties, my record collection had grown to be legendary. One day I got a call from Ken Freedman, station manager of the famous underground freeform New Jersey based radio station WFMU, asking me if I would like to audition for a show. He'd heard that I had a great collection which might be right in line with WFMU's style. Having long been a listener, but with no history of radio, I agreed to audition. A few weeks later, I found myself as a WFMU DJ, pulling things from my collection as well as from the vast station's library – one of the greatest collections of strange and obscure music – which had been slowly accumulating since the early sixties. While there are many things to be said about my time at WFMU – roughly 1995 to 2009 – for our purposes here, I'll limit my comments to the effect doing a radio show had upon my collecting which mostly had to do with technology.



Sometime around 1998, the station got a CD burner and suddenly, what the station possessed could be mine. I ended up spending as much time ripping CDs as I did preparing for my show. I recall at first making facsimile photo copies of liner notes and inserts of the discs, which I would then meticulously cut and fit into jewel boxes. Still at this point, the trappings of music – liner notes, track listings, production credits, artwork – were still as important as the music itself. If it wasn't properly boxed, I couldn't accept it as a real artifact. As a result, my shelves became even more crammed with rarities which I could otherwise never obtain nor afford.

Everything changed when MP3s arrived on the scene. Ripping CDs at WFMU became much easier and I spent my entire show pumping CDs into the computer and leaving the station with literally dozens of discs as MP3s each week. Suddenly, my music collection moved towards invisibility from the glorious trappings of artwork and liner notes, all swapped for a folder on a hard drive. It is at this point, for me, that music became data and with the advent of file-sharing took on an aspect of information management and sociability; if it couldn't be shared, it wasn't worth having. This is the moment in which I moved from being a collector to being an archivist.

Audio: Alfred Wolfsohn 'Lend Me Your Ears', from the LP *Vox Humana: Alfred Wolfsohn's Experiments in the Extension of Human Vocal Range* (Folkways Records, 1956).

Here's a German guy who lived through two World Wars and what did he learn? He learned how to make people sing in unnaturally high pitches. Go figure.

Thought Number 5

At this point in the story, as we enter the digital age, I feel it's important to read my Six File Sharing Epiphanies which I published last year in *The Wire*, which responds to the moment that music becomes ephemeral.

Epiphany no. 1: While I could discuss any number of musical epiphanies I've personally experienced over the past half-century, all of them would pale in comparison to the epiphany of seeing Napster for the first time. Although prior to Napster, I had been a member of several file sharing communities, the sheer scope, variety, and seeming endlessness of Napster was mind-boggling: you never knew what you were going to find and how much of it was going to be there. It was as if every record store, flea market, and charity shop in the world had been connected by a searchable database and had flung their doors open, begging you to walk away with as much as you could carry for free. But it was even better because the supply never exhausted; the coolest record you've ever dug up could now be shared with all your friends. Of course this has been exacerbated many times over with the advent of torrents and MP3 blogs.

Epiphany no. 2: One of the first things that struck me about Napster was how damn impure (read: eclectic) people's tastes were. Whilst browsing another user's files, I was stunned find John Cage MP3s alphabetically snuggled up next to, say, Mariah Carey files in the same directory. Everyone has guilty pleasures, however, never before have they been so exposed – and celebrated – this publically. While such impure impulses have always existed in the avant-garde, they've pretty much remained hidden. For instance, on UbuWeb we host a compilation of the ultra-modernist conductor and musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky's early recordings of Varese, Ives, and Ruggles. But we also host a recording of Slonimsky croaking out bawdy tunes about constipated children on an out-of-tune piano. 'Opens up the BOW-ELS!'. He sounds absolutely smashed. The Slonimsky recording is part of The 365 Days Project which is a collection of featuring crazy stuff: celebrity, children, demonstration, indigenous, industrial, outsider, song-poem, spoken, ventriloquism, etc.; snuggled in with the crazy Mormons, twangy garage bands, and singing stewardesses is one of the fathers of the American avant-garde, Nicolas Slonimsky.

Epiphany no. 3: File sharing is non-contextual. The cohesive vision of an album has been ditched in favor of the single or the playlist. Many people getting music online have no idea where something came from, nor do they care. For instance, we find that many people downloading MP3s from UbuWeb have no interest the historical context; instead, the site seen as a vast resource of 'cool' and 'weird'



sounds to remix or throw into dance mixes. It's been reported that samples from Bruce Nauman's mantric chant, 'Get out of my mind, get out of this room' from his Raw Materials compilation on Ubu has been recently been the mixed with beats and is somewhat the rage with unwitting partiers on dance floors in São Paulo.

Epiphany no. 4: As a result, I stopped buying music. I used to be a record junkie. For years, I spent most of my free time hunting down discs in dusty corners of the world. I'll never forget my honeymoon in Amsterdam in 1989. I bought an extra suitcase so I could bring home dozens of Dutch reissues of Stax and Atco soul LPs that were completely unavailable in New York. While I travel extensively these days, I haven't set foot in a record store in well over a decade. Why bother when the best record store sits on my laptop in my hotel room? A few nights ago at home, after putting the kids to bed, I was parked in front of the computer sipping bourbon. My wife asked me what I was doing. I told her I was going record shopping. As I glanced at my screen, ten discs I would've killed for way back when were streaming down to my living room for free.

Epiphany no. 5: I don't know about you, but I've lost my object fetish. But then again, I was never the type of collector who bought records for their cool covers: the music had to be great. Still, I have 10,000 vinyls gathering dust in my hallway and as many CDs in racks on my wall. I don't use them. To me, if music can't be shared, I'm not interested in it. Once, however, I digitize these objects and they enter into the file sharing ecosystem, they become alive for me again. As many dead LPs and CDs I have, I've got many times that number of discs sitting on a dozen hard drives, flying up and down my network.

Epiphany no. 6: It's all about quantity. Just like you, I'm drowning in my riches. I've got more music on my drives than I'll ever be able to listen to in the next ten lifetimes. As a matter of fact, records that I've been craving for years (such as the complete recordings of Jean Cocteau which we just posted on Ubu) are languishing unlistened to. I'll never get to them either, because I'm more interested in the hunt than I am in the prey. The minute I get something, I just crave more. And so something has really changed – and I think this is the real epiphany: the ways in which culture is distributed has become profoundly more intriguing than the cultural artifact itself. What we've experienced is an inversion of consumption, one in which we've come to prefer the acts of acquisition over that which we are acquiring, the bottles over the wine.

Audio: Jim Roche, 'Bubble Blower', from the LP *Learning to Count* (Hard Line, 1982).

Roche was a guy from the Deep South who sat in galleries and channeled the racist Klansmen of his youth. He would work himself up into trances and make up these incredible rants.

Thought Number 6

What is the difference between a collector and an archivist? A collector collects according to whim, passion, and often budget. Walter Benjamin in his essay on collecting, 'Unpacking My Library', says that 'Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories.' Those messy memories for me constitute the personal way I've defined my intellectual life and pursuits through the building of my collection – let's say from my grandfather to UbuWeb – which renders the act of collecting of autobiography and personal history. What I collect and how I go about it distinguishes my collection from yours, thus my intellectual life from yours, my worldview from yours.

But in many cases this is a vanishing tradition. In America today, most houses are bereft of intellectual collections: they are large and empty, hollow and echoey. They have big overstuffed couches and giant media stations for consuming on-demand media, but there are no books, no CDs, no records, and no collections (with perhaps the exception of a wine cellar); there are no objects which bear traces of previous ownership or in any way attempt to be expressive of an intellectual life lived. This is an anti-intellectual environment, one of mere entertainment. Yet the digital collector's home and the entertainment home may not look so dissimilar after all, due to the fact that today's digital collections are invisible.



A collector of intellectual materials gathers them emotionally, making intuitive connections that exist outside of official history books, which constitutes a subjective and personal version of history. The collector's collection is generally for his use only or used to compare with his peer's collections. The collector rarely attempts to situate his collection outside of the discourse of his own internal dialogue. In this way, the collector is like an outsider artist, speaking a private language to a coterie, without the need to jump into a larger discourse. The collector's world is a self-created and maintained one.

The archivist, on the other hand, attempts to objectify knowledge, organizing it in ways that make sense to others. While the archivist's provenance may include collections bequeathed to an archive, it is the job of the archivist to narrative and situate those collecting impulses within larger historical trends. The archivist must make a convincing argument; the archives themselves must be the supporting evidence in that argument.

The archive itself is different from the collection. A collection is ephemeral, while an archive often aspires for permanence. Recently I witnessed the piecemeal selling off of the great poet Jackson Mac Low's library in a flea market near my house. First editions of Jackson's books, rarities of his friend's books signed to Jackson, and so forth were all thrown to the wind. Yet Jackson's archive – consisting of his correspondence and manuscripts – was sold to a university archive, loving cared for in perpetuity. As such, the archive represents stability, whereas the collection represents the moment.

The archive strives for comprehensiveness and completeness, whereas a collection is acquired willy-nilly, bit by bit, according to whim, budget, availability. The collection isn't definitive of anything other than taste. It's always curious to me when a collector decides to call his collection an archive. The Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive for Visual and Concrete Poetry in Miami Beach houses hundreds of thousands of works of text-based art. But it started as a collection of Russian Constructivist paintings which grew to become exclusively devoted to concrete and visual poetry. At some point, it became the definitive collection of this type of work, acquiring every piece of visual and concrete poetry it could get its hands on, that it renamed itself an archive. While the collectors' personal taste drove the collection, at some point it gave way to historically comprehensive concerns.

Collecting can imply use; archiving can imply storage for future use. But not always. Archiving can be big; collecting can be small.

Audio: Reese Williams, "The Sonance Project in Two Parts" (excerpt), Recorded in 1977. Self-released LP.

Laugh tracks looped and chopped up into minimalist music.

Thought Number 7

Today the line between collector and archivist is blurring. When I was acquiring records, I was a collector. Today, I am an archivist, acquiring not out of desire, but taking MP3s because they are there. I download entire oeuvres of artist that I sort of like more for the sake of having it all than really wanting it all. We've all become completists. Economics has something to do with it: when was paying for my music, I was very picky. Today, it's all free and hard drive space is cheap, so I just grab it and archive it. I am constantly arranging my archives; like gardening, I clean them up, weed out duplicates, reorganize them so that they make more sense, backing them up – everything, it seems, but actually listen them. So the MP3s – my music collection – have simply become more material, information to be managed, but not used.

I know I'm not the only one doing this. It seems to be a common way to interact with digital music. So we can in some ways say that archiving is the new folk art, something that is widely practiced and has unconsciously become integrated into a great many people's lives, potentially transforming a necessity into a work of art. Now, at first thought it seems wrong: how can the storing and categorizing of digital (or analogue) data be folk art? Isn't folk art the opposite, something predicated upon the subjective handcrafting of an object into a unique and personal statement, often times one that expresses a larger community ethos?



One need think of, say, the magnificent quilts of Gee's Bend produced over many generations by a group of African-American women who live in an isolated Alabama town. Each quilt is unique, while bearing the mark of that specific community. Or the spectacular cosmic visions of someone like Reverend Howard Finster, whose obsessive, emotional hand-rendered religious paintings and sculptures could only be sprung from the unique genius of Finster himself.

Like quilting, archiving employs the obsessive stitching together of many small pieces into a larger vision, a personal attempt at ordering a chaotic world. It's not such a far leap from the quiltmaker to the stamp collector or book collector. Walter Benjamin, an obsessive collector himself, wrote about the close connection between collecting and making when he said: 'Among children, collecting is only one process of renewal; other processes are the painting of objects, the cutting out of figures, the application of decals – the whole range of childlike modes of acquisition, from touching things to giving them names.' In Benjaminian terms, all of these impulses – making, collecting and archiving – can be construed as folk practices.

Let's add to that the organizing of digital materials. The advent of digital culture has turned each one of us into an unwitting archivist. From the moment we used the 'save as' command when composing electronic documents, our archival impulses began. 'Save as' is a command that implies replication; and replication requires more complex archival considerations: where do I store the copy? Where is the original saved? What is the relationship between the two? Do I archive them both or do I delete the original?

When our machines become networked, it gets more complicated. When we take that document and email it to a friend or professor, our email program automatically archives a copy of both the email we sent as well as duplicating our attachment and saving it into a 'sent items' folder. If that same document is sent to a listserv, then that identical archival process is happening on dozens – perhaps even thousands – of machines, this time archived as a 'received item' on each of those email systems. When we, as members of that listserv, open that attachment, we need to decide if – and then where – to save it. I could go on, but you get the point. Writing on an electronic platform is not only writing, but also doubles as archiving; the two processes are inseparable.

Or take the 'simple' act of listening to music. If we look closer at that which we automatically do every day without thinking, we'll find it's not so simple. Let's say I want to play a CD on my computer. The moment I insert it into my drive, a database is called up (Gracenote) and it begins peppering my disc with ID3 tags, useful when I decide to rip the disc to MP3s. The archiving process has begun. Unlike an LP, where all that was required was to slap the platter on a turntable and listen to the music, the MP3 process requires me to become a librarian. The ID3 tags make it possible for me to quickly locate my artifact within my MP3 archive. If Gracenote can't find it, I must insert those fields – artist, album, track, etc. – myself.

iTunes automatically stores these MP3s into my iTunes Music directory, creating two new folders – the first being the artists' name and the second, the album's name. Within the album folder, I find that these tracks have been assigned numbers and names, as well as bearing its ID3 tags. If I move these MP3s into the iTunes program to play them, iTunes automatically creates yet another database of all this information, seeking as well to acquire album artwork and so forth. And yet, I might decide that I don't want my files archived according to the iTunes scheme and stored on my hard drive, which is quickly running out of space. Instead, I store all my MP3s on a large external hard drive, organized by a schema that makes sense to me, which involves another level of transfer and archiving. Once I want to share my playlists or MP3s with other people, I must archive on yet an entirely other level.

All of this needs to be constantly backed up, which creates yet another level of the archive. No one wants to lose their data. Since I've pretty much been living online for the past fifteen years, archiving my work – my documents, my correspondence, my collections, and so forth – has become just as important as the creation of new artifacts. Having lost too much information over the years, I religiously back up: some drives are backed up redundantly, two or three times. Clearly, all of this is a far cry -- and a lot of extra busy work – from the act of



merely listening to music. In fact, I spend much more time acquiring, cataloging and archiving my artifacts these days than I do actually engaging with them. Again, as an archivist – as distinct from the collector – the ways in which culture is distributed and archived has become profoundly more intriguing than the cultural artifact itself.

Our primary impulse, then, has moved from creators to collectors and archivists, proving Walter Benjamin, once more to be prophetic: suffice it to quote the answer which Anatole France gave to a philistine who admired his library and then finished with the standard question, 'And you have read all these books, Monsieur France?' 'Not one-tenth of them. I don't suppose you use your Sevres china every day?'

Audio: Sean Landers, 'The Man Within', from the self-released cassette, *The Man Within*. Recorded in the early ninties.

This is a sick, narcissistic artist bragging about how great he is. And the scary thing is that he actually believes every word he says.

03. Related links

UbuWeb
www.ubu.com

Kenneth Goldsmith at Ràdio Web MACBA
rwm.macba.cat/en/kenneth_goldsmith_tag

Conversation with Kenneth Goldsmith on his sound collection
rwm.macba.cat/en/extra/memorabilia_kenneth_goldsmith_conversation/capsula

Kenneth Goldsmith's audio teaser for the *Memorabilia. Collecting sounds with...* lecture series
rwm.macba.cat/en/extra/teaser_memorabilia_kenneth_goldsmith/capsula

Memorabilia. Collecting sounds with... series at Ràdio Web MACBA
rwm.macba.cat/en/memorabilia_tag/

Epiphanies: Kenneth Goldsmith, at The Wire Magazine
www.thewire.co.uk/articles/6445

04. Credits

This lecture took place on April 20, 2012.
www.macba.cat/en/lecture-memorabilia