



**ARTIST**

Doug Manchee

**TITLE**

1900-03-23

**DATE**

2008

**DIMENSIONS**

15 in H x 20 in W

**MEDIUM**

Inkjet Prints

**IMAGE NOTES**

sheet 17 x 22"

**CATALOGUE NUMBER**

2009.069

**CURRENT LOCATION**

2024-2D

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**DOUG MANCHEE**

**BORN**

1954

**BIRTHPLACE**

Rochester, NY

**GENDER**

Male

**CITIZENSHIP**

United States

**CULTURAL HERITAGE**

European-American

**LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP**

Artist-in-Residence, 2009

## LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 157

## BIOGRAPHY

Doug Manchee made the trip all the way from Rochester, NY, for his residency. He arrived with plans to create several book dummies from various series of work. Manchee has already assembled a magnificent edit, sequence, and layout for a book based on his series *Archive*, a body of work that was also the subject of the exhibition *Picturing the Archive* in May 2009 at Visual Studies Workshop. The 96-page book will build on the structure of the exhibition and will be self-published in a limited edition. Also during his residency, Manchee plans to shoot new images of bookstores and of personal photographic archives as a further exploration of how we catalog and preserve our visual history.

Manchee received both his BA and MA from San Francisco State University. He is currently an Associate Professor at Rochester Institute of Technology, where he is also Program Chair for Advertising Photography. Manchee has shown work at Thomas Werner Gallery in NYC, the Ping Yao International Photography Exhibition, Ping Yao, China, and Gallery Kunsler, Rochester, NY, among other venues.

## ESSAYS

Doug Manchee spent three years photographing in the Research Center at Visual Studies Workshop (VSW) in Rochester, NY. This hybrid library/archive holds roughly 800,000 photographic print, negative, and slide images; 500 original audiotapes of image maker and historian lectures; 25,000 volumes related to the media arts; 5,000 artists' books; and thousands of periodicals. A good portion of what is collected in the Research Center, specifically many of the photographic images, was saved from destruction. For example the archive of Lejaren á Hiller, the first ever practitioner of commercial photographic illustration, salvaged from sidewalk trash piles in New York City after the illustrator's death, is now stored at VSW. Manchee did not set out to document objects in the Research Center or record the state of the place in time. His approach is more equivocal and evocative, and his photographs of the archive summon the search, but forgo the retrieval, of memory. Manchee conceptualizes storage, a key concern of our time, and what is archival about the mind. In his interiors, Manchee creates picture planes with large blurry areas and a pivot point at the edge of the image. His picture method encapsulates what it is to physically be in the space, closely approximate to one thing, while in possession of the knowledge that there are hundreds of items beyond you. With this awareness we are both in the place and also within a fuzzy mental space where everything is obtainable, but nothing is immediate. This everything/nothing sense is affirmed by our eye activity as we turn from the area in focus to the blurry vastness and back again, our eyes pivoting on a point of structure—a hinge or shelf—that links and holds different parts of things together. In this way, Manchee engages a search for what is inevitably there, though non-specific. We arrive at a conception of memory: that it is everything and nothing at once. This conceptualization continues through Manchee's portrayal of storage devices. His photographs of boxes, bags, and diskettes confront us with vagueness. An unmarked audiotape could be blank, or every magnetic second might have information. Boxes that rest on shelves in opened metal cabinets could contain dozens of prints or be empty altogether. In Manchee's photographs the archive is not something that can be seen. The archive is an abstraction as much as a collection of photographs, documents, and ephemera. It is held in objects like manila archive boxes photographed to appear as solid objects, their flat surfaces reflecting light to emphasize their opacity. The archive comes out as a subject because it is hidden and immersed in objects. Manchee shows us that the archive remains veiled even when a box is opened. In one picture the topography of an open box is plastic-bagged opaque white papers revealing nothing. Light reflecting off the clear plastic's crinkled corner is a playful comment on how the archive is protected by its lack of transparency. The blank whiteness of the paper offers us a sign: the archive is vague because it is unwritten. It may not always be clear why we store something, but throwing it away may also be an act of hubris. Manchee's project examines the virtue of being kept. To keep something is to do nothing to it more intensely. We keep the archive as it is but add levels of protection (acid free boxes, buffered paper, and so on) not to perfect it, but to preserve its sense of potential. Memory is the retrievable storage of experience or knowledge, and Manchee's photographs show us clusters of information. His work expresses the physical-ness of clustering (for example, an image shows wads of paper prints that have curled and attached to one another); it shows the gravitation of one element to another as in the grouping of like things; and it reveals the significance of clusters to our thinking. Moreover, the project as a whole is organized in clusters of related images. All of this communicates an idea about the role of categorization in the mind. We do not just see an object or a photograph, we see a kind of object, or a type of photograph, and this categorization is important to our common thinking, not just the classification of collected things. Manchee clearly identifies this idea in how he photographs VSW's vernacular print collections in particular. In these images his full frame focuses on handwritten classifications like "Unemployed" and "War Wounds," examples of the complexity and flexible boundaries of categories. The edges of a few of the vernacular images are clearly legible poking out of file folders, faces peep out from bundles, or make eye contact from the top of a heap of prints. The role of these witnesses is less vague. They remind us that the archive is defined by the presence of people like Manchee, his point of view, and how he categorizes experience. Tate Shaw Doug Manchee is a professor of photography in the School of Photographic Art and Sciences at Rochester Institute of Technology, where he is chair of the advertising area. He was a Light Work Artist-in-Residence in July 2009. For more information visit [www.dougmancheeprojects.com](http://www.dougmancheeprojects.com). Tate Shaw is the director of Visual Studies Workshop, a non-profit center for the media arts in Rochester, NY with an MFA program in Visual Studies. He is a book artist and writer and co-publisher of Preacher's Biscuit Books